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Scrapped

A NOVEL OF POST WAR GERMANY

Scrapped

by

META SCHOEPP

adapted and translated by

LOUISE TAUSIG

*

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1929

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To my son Fritz Zimmermann

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I

"THERE!" said Dietz, in a pleased tone as he sheathed his knife. Not a mark showed on the handsome blue cloth. The gilded buttons with the anchor and crown had been cut off. Now for the substitutes! Bone buttons,—ordinary bone buttons, without character, without distinction, without self-assertion—buttons that anybody might wear—buttons that awed nobody, inspired nobody. He looked at them coolly: four gaping holes; nothing more. And a devil of a job to stick the needle into the right one. He whistled the *Flaggenlied*, the traditional song of the German navy, unwound an endless thread from the spool, and resolutely clutched his needle. He held its eye against the light, squinted, and aimed. . . . He felt himself carried back to the day when, as a cadet, he took his first rifle aim. . . . The *Flaggenlied* died away. "This is the hardest part," he muttered, taking off his coat. The task had made him warm. At his feet lay Pit, the tousled spaniel, pretending to sleep, while on the shabby sofa sprawled Fred von Stauffen building air castles. He kept up a steady stream of chatter.

"How do you expect me to thread it," said Dietz, "when you keep on talking?"

Fred picked up the newspaper and began to study the advertisements. When Dietz finally began to sew, Fred spoke again.

"Quit singing that thing!" he said.

"I only whistled it!"

"Same thing!"

" 'Tisn't!"

"We must get it out of our heads——"

"Even the tune?"

"Of course! Now you've queered my day!"

That was too much for Dietz. He straightened up.

"Who? I? Because I whistled the *Flaggenlied*? With you looking on while I work myself to a frazzle?"

"If you had done it sooner, we'd have our jobs by now."

Dietz laughed. "That's right, blame it on me. When did you rip yours off?"

"Yesterday."

"Why?"

"Because we're done for."

"A pretty excuse! You know darn well it was only yesterday that the First Officer came out with it: 'Shed the old trappings! Rise like a Phoenix out of the ashes!' He put me in mind of the days when he'd give us a good lecture and then stick us in the brig. But I was surprised when he paid for the cognac—in fact, that he should have invited us at all——"

"Just the same he's right. We didn't have to kick everything overboard in the first heat of the excitement. The Fatherland is now nicely rid of us, and we can pay the doctor's bills."

Dietz appeared to agree. He remained silent. He cautiously drew the long thread through the button and cloth. Fred continued to read the advertisements intently. When he came upon something promising, he checked it with his blue pencil. Until the first button was sewed on, the room was silent, save for Pit's deep breathing and the impudent ticking of a battered alarm clock, standing on the table between a shaving outfit and a sailor's cap.

Dietz stretched himself, flung out his arms,—you'd think he was throwing hand-grenades—and scowled at the buttons.

"Did the army get a good, dirty deal?"

"You bet!"

Dietz looked his approval. "Serves them right!"

A long pause. A forced laugh from Fred broke the silence.

"If only that didn't mean my father."

Dietz turned red. "Sorry—I meant——"

After another silence Fred summoned the courage to add: "But it's even harder on my mother."

Dietz seemed not to hear; he sewed frantically.

"You know, don't you, that my brother fell in battle—infantryman—" Fred persisted, "But all the same a very decent chap!"

He stared at his newspaper and absently made a blue mark to the left of an ingenuous request for a young lady to do double duty as hair-dresser and dressmaker.

Suddenly he sprang up, planted himself in front of Dietz, and started talking furiously. Dietz bore it with a strange meekness.

"Do you for a moment think I would stick here—a burden to you—if I could stand it at home? My father finecombs the papers, just as I do, and wherever a first-class man is wanted for a job, he applies. He is childish enough to believe that a colonel with his record would be considered a first-class employee. Why, only the other day I came upon him in a waiting-room—And who does *not* consider himself a first-class man to-day?—I had to make a quick getaway—I couldn't let him know I saw him—when I overheard one of those snippy 16-year old office boys say to him, 'The Boss wants younger men!' And not one among those job-hunters there felt ashamed to see that white-haired man swallow a dismissal like that. They must have seen the gashes on his jaw—they must have seen his wooden leg—and I stood there, cold to the marrow, and couldn't get my hands on that brat's neck—

couldn't take the old man by the arm—he'd never live down the shame that I—I—had seen——"

His voice broke. He turned white. His tightly clenched fists quivered. And Dietz began to thread his needle again, though he saw neither needle nor thread. He hated himself because he could find nothing to say.

Just then the dog began to scratch himself deliberately. Dietz sprang up—and the needle and the buttons and the coat flew to the floor.

"That's what I call a downright piece of vulgarity," he cried. "The beast gets on my nerves! Does he think we're still on shipboard, where we had to put up with such things?" Pit crept discreetly under the sofa while Dietz poured out his bitterness.

"Why don't you say the cur isn't good enough for you? Why do you take it out on me when he annoys you? Let him just *dare* show himself! He'd better look out. And anyway, how did I come to take the mutt with me? Here, Pit——"

But Pit did not come. Dietz took hold of the sofa.

Fred pulled him away. "What's the dog got to do with it?"

"*You* brought it up!"

"I? It never entered my head!"

"Anyway, you've been picking on me all morning. First, it's the *Flaggenlied*. Then it's the buttons. And my quarters don't suit you. Good Lord! Why shouldn't he scratch himself if he has an itch Do you suppose he does it for fun? And do you think for a moment that he likes to stick here all day, under my chair, when he's used to the sea air? Now you even grudge him a little scratching?"

"I?"

"Say the word—if the three of us haven't room enough here, he goes. Only last night I was saying to myself how cozy

the place is, how nice it is to have some one to talk to. Do you think a person can stand being alone with his thoughts—with thoughts that keep screaming, 'You're through!' Here, Pit! Go to the devil! If I've got to do it with my own hands——"

Fred grabbed Dietz by the shoulder. "Leave him alone! He'll stay—even if things get worse! He belongs. And I'll stay too, even if you do throw it up to me. Understand? It only shows you up. And as far as I'm concerned, sing your 'Schwartz-Weiss-Rot'. But see that you get some insect powder for Pit, and tackle your hair. Didn't the First Officer say every sign of our old life must go? That includes the navy hair cut."

"Not for mine! And as for insect-powder—his skin is too tender."

Dietz began to coax Pit, whose funny little head now cautiously peered out of his hiding place. He crawled out on his belly. Dietz patted the little head but could not bring himself to meet the look in those black devoted eyes. "You little fool. I didn't mean it that way." He got down on his knees and hunted for the needle and buttons, and didn't say a word, though the dog's joyous tail flipped his face. Fred stood before the glass and belabored his head with pomade and brushes. He hummed the *Flaggenlied* softly. And Dietz sewed on his buttons as if he heard nothing.

Then they began to answer the advertisements. Their pens scratched noisily. In place of recommendations, they put down their service record; for reference, the navy in which they had served as young officers—Dietz as aviator, Fred as second officer on a submarine.

"You don't have to make it so polite," said Dietz, looking over Fred's shoulder.

"Why not?"

Dietz turned scarlet—"I somehow feel as if these letters dishonored the navy—as if we were ordinary beggars——"

"Well?—Aren't we?" asked Fred, also reddening.

"Yes. But they don't have to know it. Once we get a job—we'll show them what we can do!"

"Sure thing! But first we have to get the job."

And they continued to write. Every place where a knowledge of English or French was required, where automobile mechanics were wanted, where situations of trust were offered, and wherever brilliant life-positions to gentlemen of good connections were promised, they answered: every advertisement a hope, every advertiser a benefactor—at least to Dietz. He had not been searching for work as long as Fred, and he still believed that he could do anything demanded of him.

"These money-grubbers will be tickled to get us!"

Fred remained silent.

"And I *want* to work! God! how I want to work!"

Again the dark head bent over the sheet. But the words danced before his eyes. In spite of his hopefulness, in spite of his faith in his lucky star, something paralyzing crept upon him, something that even in the roar of battle, even on the Skaggerak and in his flights over the enemy lines, he had never known, something that he never, never would have acknowledged to himself, now took hold of him. Menacing. Cold. That was fear, chilling, lurking fear. The dancing letters became numbers. He must hide these from Fred. He had led Fred to believe that the income from a tidy bit of money a generous uncle had deposited for him allowed him to play the occasional host. Otherwise Fred would not have stayed with him even for a day. He did not suspect that only yesterday Dietz had sold his father's gold watch, a piece of rare

old workmanship, for 400 marks, that the generous support given him by his rich uncle amounted to 50 marks a month, that a few days ago when someone had offered him 100 marks for Pit—for a moment, for a little moment, he had actually turned it over in his mind!

"Oh hell!" Dietz cried, and sprang up. His chair hit the floor with a bang. An ink spot lay on Fred's nice clean sheet, and Pit's hair stood on end, as he awaited some kind of attack.

"Just on the 'deepest respect'," Fred said peevishly. He too had stopped writing, and yawned. He respected his friend's outburst. How can you help it when it comes over you that way? What's more, this came at the right moment. He had just assured a Mr. Israel who needed an expert secretary, preferably a discharged officer—of his deepest respect. That was an open lie! He had absolutely no respect for this Mr. Israel! He did not even know him! And he was probably a big scoundrel!

"Hell!" he muttered in turn, as he threw himself on the sofa and watched Dietz make ready to go out. To-day it was his turn to take the letters to the newspaper office. And while Fred eyed him, he recalled what he had told the First Officer only yesterday: "A man can never hide his breeding!" What if this youngster here, before the glass, has already risen, a confident Phoenix, out of the ashes—he will always be the old Dietz. How did the First Officer put it? "In the struggle for existence, strike at the man ahead of you! Use every advantage, play on every weakness of your antagonist—and the man ahead of you *is* your antagonist. It isn't knowing, but *bluffing* that counts nowadays!" . . . It is easy enough to say, 'Put a seaman on a horse, he'll learn to ride in time.' But this chap will always warn the man ahead of him when he blun-

ders, will always pull him out of a jam, no matter what the cost. That's what he's always done. "Oh Dietz," Fred wailed, "what an old fool you've been!"

Dietz laid down his brushes and looked in the glass at Fred.

"Starting again——?"

He felt on edge. To be reduced to bone buttons was bad enough—if only a civilian hat didn't go with them! . . . . The iron cross he always wore now lay in the bureau. Bone buttons and the cross! If you can't show that you once belonged, you might as well pack up the whole outfit! He felt a burning in his breast, and it soothed him to be irritated by Fred. He wanted to scream. But Fred anticipated him.

"I only meant——"

Dietz slowly picked up his brushes. His mouth quivered.

"With that face," said Fred, "you'll get somewhere. It's a show of misery they want. They're through with the *'Unsere Marine'* stuff. The higher-ups in their easy chairs want to see for themselves that we're up against it—that they can lord it over us *now*. As for getting the best of an empty stomach with a stiff upper lip—those days are over! We must grovel. We must whine. That's the way to get benevolence out of them. It's what they call 'adjustment to the new order.' "

"Come, Pit," commanded Dietz, and left the room without another word.

"Pit," said he on the stairs, as he lit a cigarette with shaking hands, "do me a favor and behave yourself. Your last escapade cost me my cane and ten marks for damages—you ripped the cur's ear. If Fred should hear of it, he'll give us a lecture on the advantages of good breeding, and this time, I'll agree with him."

Pit listened gravely. With his nose close to his master's

heels, he followed, and contented himself with baring his sharp little teeth to each passing dog.

They reached Potsdammer Platz. It looked like a fair. Ex-soldiers in field-gray peddled chocolates and cigarettes, suspenders and English tobacco.

"Stolen goods," mused Dietz recalling the plunder in the Casino the night some one took his camera—"by mistake." On the curb, a man in a silk hat stood unashamed, hawking a book: "The Horrors of My Prison Days!" Not far from him, two soldier boys, still in a daze at being ousted from their rôles of returned heroes, lay sprawled on the side-walk, beggars, making a show of their broken bodies. Above them, on the wall of the building, clung two weather-faded posters in uncanny juxtaposition: one, a picture of Hindenburg in his steel helmet, above the magic words "Carry on!," the other, a giant fist of red, thrust out from a background of blackness. . . . The sun laughed down cruelly upon the dirt of the street; at the paper and refuse in the mud of the gutter, at the hollow, waxen faces whose tired eyes sought the help that no one gave. But the sun shone approvingly upon the women airing their new spring clothes, and upon the hurrying men whose eyes betrayed their liking for life. Upon Pit, too, as he took great care to keep close to his master in the pushing crowd.

"Look at that cute little dog," a young miss said as she nudged her friend, but she looked at Dietz and blushed.

"If you'd kill 'm, you could cook 'm for a rabbit," piped a twelve-year old communist to a man whose peddler's tray held soap, chocolate and shoe-laces.

Just then a large sheep dog with an elegant leather collar made overtures to Pit, and wagging his tail, sniffed at

him. But Pit, with a shrill yelp, made for the other's handsome nose. The big dog stood petrified.

"I call that a direct assault," said his mink-coated owner, "why do you notice a mongrel like that?" Dietz pretended not to hear.

After a long walk, he reached the newspaper office and left the letters. He ached for the green coolness of the Tiergarten. Snatching Pit up in his arms, he sprang on a bus.

"Pardon me," said some one over whose outstretched foot Dietz had stumbled. Pit bared his teeth at the man.

Dietz looked the long thin man in the face——

"Man alive! Is it you Hermann?" he cried, at the same time closing the dog's jaws.

But the polite young man was suddenly seized with a fit of coughing; he swung about and turned up his coat collar. The passengers immediately took his part, and Dietz found himself confronted by a hostile group.

"You needn't stand for that," said a man to the cougher.

"He and his kind think it's the same as before——"

"And the nerve of him with a dog!"

"If he disturbs you, you may get off," Dietz said suavely. "And I beg to be forgiven for calling this gentleman here a man!" While the passengers were deciding whether or not the insult was atoned for, Dietz paid his fare and lectured Pit.

"Haven't I forbidden you a thousand times to speak your mind like that? And haven't these gentlemen a right to be annoyed? Do leave people alone—" Pit's little heart beat like a hammer; he stuck his head under his master's coat, and the passengers seemed appeased.

As Dietz watched Hermann Seke, whose fit of coughing was endless, his childhood came before him. He was car-

ried back to the home of his birth, the little district town where his father practiced medicine, where everybody was a self-appointed judge of his neighbor, including, naturally, Dietz and his playmate, Friedel, fated to be killed in the first year of the war. He saw himself idling along the Bahnhof Strasse with the latter. It was a fast-day; he was sure of that. Out of a house, the one in which the fat daughters of the baker lived, strolled the three Sekes—father and mother arm-in-arm, and beside them Hermann. Hermann saw his classmates, but did not greet them. And the parents saw the boys. The wife threw back her head, yellow straw hat and all, her crooked mouth slipping further to one side, while the man sternly beckoned his son nearer. Somebody had told Herr Seke that the two smoked cigarettes and that they had unmercifully thrashed another schoolboy, because he had made eyes at golden-haired Anna Marie at dancing-school.

"When boys already show signs of vice at such an early age," Herr Seke had declared at the town meeting, for he was a councilman, "decent children must be warned against associating with them."

This had resulted in a boycott of Herr Seke's stationery shop after Dietz and Friedel had secretly threatened to beat up any boy who bought his note-books and pencils there.

"He gave the school a bad name," Dietz had proclaimed. "Down with Hermann Seke!" From that day on, Hermann did not dare to venture alone on the streets—and terror reigned in the whole neighborhood, an orange terror, for the high school juniors wore orange caps. Every household was the scene of lively argument. The combined parenthood was for Herr Seke, while the sons were for Dietz to a man.

And at that time, the two friends had walked behind the Seke family, loudly exchanging their opinions on Hermann, and still more loudly praising the copy books of Herr Seke's competitor, maintaining that this competitor was a regular fellow, and that in every book of his there were two extra pages, and that it was cruelty to animals to let Hermann do gymnastics because his spindle legs might break. Herr Seke had jerked his wife and child closer to himself, and swung around the corner, down another street——

"Leipziger Platz!" called the conductor.

Dietz alighted into a changed world. No dirt. No litter. A genteel quiet in the air. Two prim rows of horse-chestnuts held up their white candles to the clear blue above. A policeman strutted by in his new, outlandish, green uniform. The sight of him, strange to say, did not outrage Dietz. Had the uniform been a canary yellow, the street would have been so much the more picturesque. Now that he was wearing bone buttons, he did not have to be so fastidious. He unconsciously whistled the *Flaggenlied*. He was still a child, he still wore the orange cap, and saw his father standing before him with Herr Seke's complaint in his hands. The knowing eyes behind the spectacles beamed delightedly, but the mouth thundered indignation. "Even though I happen to agree with you in theory, you are nevertheless wrong in practice. You are much too young to be an Alcibiades; besides, I have to bear the brunt of it when you start a civil war."

And an hour later, he heard his father's full-throated laugh. Behind the discreet doors of his consulting room, he was telling the story to the head game-keeper.

Smiling inwardly, Dietz walked along in the noonday sunshine—his father, his friend—and even though the sod

had long ago covered him, he still lived for Dietz——

He was torn from his revery. Pit was barking madly, and some one behind cried in panic: "Dietz! Call him off!" Dietz wheeled about, and to his amazement saw Hermann Seke, desperately holding Pit off with his umbrella. Passers-by stopped to look. They laughed when a high-strung wolfhound, his mistress tugging on the leash, bolted from the scene—too sensitive to endure Pit's shrill yelping.

"Stop, Pit!" commanded Dietz—lifting the squirming little dog by the neck and tucking him under his arm. "What makes you beat a sea hound with an umbrella, Hermann?" he asked scornfully. "And why fall upon him from behind? If you feel you've been insulted, tell *me*."

Hermann, now the center of public interest, leaned in bewilderment against the iron rail before the Esplanade Hotel.

"I didn't do a thing to him. I only tapped you on the shoulder——"

"You tapped me on the shoulder?" Dietz asked in astonishment. "And yet you are surprised! Thank your stars he's not a bulldog! He would have chewed you up!" He bent tenderly over the panting little bundle under his arm. "How many times must I tell you that we must not give in to our feelings! Theoretically you may be right—" and without paying any attention to the amusement of his audience, Dietz shook his head as he caught sight of Hermann's provincial-looking cotton umbrella.

"Didn't your father once own that?" he asked. "And now you use it as a club against defenseless people? I should never have believed it of you, Hermann."

He walked ahead and Hermann followed him.

"So! You felt insulted, and wanted to get even," continued Dietz, so coolly that Hermann was seized with panic.

"In your place I should have done the same thing. I'll let you decide how we shall settle this— It's all the same to me; machine-guns, hand-grenades, gas-bombs—take your pick."

The terrified Hermann stammered: "But listen! I'm not a bit offended!"

"Not offended——?"

"Not in the least! I only wanted to tell you how glad I was to see you——"

"We didn't notice that, did we Pit?"

"Think of my position, Dietz. The mayor's wife was sitting in the bus—she never had any use for you—I have my reputation to consider——"

Like a steel blade, Dietz cut in: "Your reputation——!"

"Don't misunderstand me, Dietz. Papa made me his partner; I am in the firm. So I have to be careful——"

"Careful—? In my presence——?"

Hermann turned white.

"Can't you understand? If the mayor's wife had seen me talking to you, it would have gotten around. And now that you are done for——"

Dietz confronted Hermann sharply.

"Who's done for?"

"I—I mean the navy! It's not *your* fault! But the Frau Mayor has turned Republican since the Kaiser is out. Yes, that's why, Dietz! All of us back home are for the Republic, and I'm only glad I wasn't in the mess. I can't thank Papa enough for that. He had me exempted. And the firm is flourishing now, so much so that we have been able to buy two pieces of property. That's why I have to be careful of appearances. You can understand that! You were always known to be an adventurer, and you always wanted to be something different from the rest of us. And the pastor was

saying only the other day that if you're up against it now, you have only yourself to blame——"

"The *pastor* said that!"

Dietz fixed his eyes on the man beside him. Why didn't he hit him across that thin-lipped slandering mouth of his? He set Pit on the ground.

"I'm supposed to be up against it?"

No. He did not look like that, Hermann told himself with a sudden rush of envy. This cool, self-possessed young man with the scar over his right eye did not look like that. Hermann shook with fury. Again his soft-heartedness had played him a trick.

Out of kindness and pity he had followed Dietz, knowing how it must feel to be snubbed by decent people, and he had expected, at least, to be thanked, because, in spite of everything, hadn't he offered his hand? Dietz seemed to have no idea what courage it took for a man like him, a member of the governing party, to be seen on the street with an ex-naval officer! Especially for a member of a firm in good standing! Did Dietz think the people at home did not know what was what? Hermann Seke's face lost its look of terror and again took on the self-approving expression of the virtuous citizen.

"I hope we've been mistaken," said he in the tone he usually employed when he sent intruding salesmen on their way. "But at the bowling club the other night, Judge Klinger was saying that the cheapest labor now-a-days is offered by discharged naval officers, that for two marks a day one can hire them as servants, because they're good for nothing else——"

Dietz felt the calm that had always possessed him before battle coming over him.

His mouth set in a rigid line. His eyelids half closed, for several seconds the muscles of his jaw quivered. Then he calmly reached into his pocket. Hermann Seke saw a correct silver cigarette case; Dietz took a cigarette from it, and slowly carried it to his lips. When the cigarette was lighted, Dietz had regained his composure.

"You know, of course," said he, "that my father once called Judge Klinger a scoundrel in public. I'm not surprised to hear of this piece of stupidity on the part of the judge. I wouldn't waste a word on him. But your town need have no worry on my account. Didn't you see in all the papers that Dr. Rathenau took me in. I'm well fixed. I have my motor car; my two stenographers, one blonde, the other brunette, and a private phone to Wilhelmstrasse."

He caught sight of a vacant taxi. He hailed it. It stopped. He opened the door. Pit immediately jumped on the back seat, stuck out his little red tongue, and panted with joy.

"To the Adlon," crisply ordered Dietz, as he stepped in. The car rolled away, Hermann stood rooted to the spot, gaping after it, and clutching his bulging umbrella. When the car had disappeared, he came to again.

"Serves me right!" he muttered, turning back in stupefaction. And then it suddenly dawned on him that Dietz had not even offered his hand.

"As soon as they get ahead in the world, their old arrogance comes back! He never was any good."

And Hermann too was carried back to the years of his boyhood. He did not see the leafy canopy which the chestnut trees spread over him; he did not feel the magic of the May day.

Nor did Dietz see the green of the Tiergarten, though it called to him from every side. He said to himself, "I'll have

to take something to make me vomit, or else I must have a cognac." Pit snuggled against him, waiting to be stroked. "Pit, you're lucky you're not a human being."

He paid the fare cooly and gave the driver a two-mark tip. He knew he would have given his last penny for that dramatic exit—When he had swallowed his second cognac, he felt his old self returning.

II

Fred waited impatiently. The mail had come. Imposing envelopes, all of them, and addressed to Dietz. They lay unopened on the table. Every time Fred looked at them he tingled with a new hope. *Manufacturer of Pharmaceutical Supplies. The Excelsior Mail Order House, First-Class Advertising Agency, The Helios Life Insurance Co., Executive Offices of the Halifax Cinema Corp., Die Hilfe Publishing Co.* Each more impressive than the rest. He paced impatiently up and down the room, hands clasped behind him, an unlit cigarette between his lips. Every time he passed the table he stole a glance at the letters. He looked at the clock. It couldn't be keeping time. The hands had hardly moved. . . . Where was Dietz? It was ruthless of him, positively ruthless. One would think he was taking a trip around the world. For Pit's sake! Of course! And because Pit needed exercise, Dietz let him sit and wait like Napoleon on St. Helena. The chances were he was following a pretty girl, or was playing Croesus, and drinking coffee at Josty's.

Fred made plans. This time he would accept any offer. Without condition, regardless of pay—just to keep body and soul together. He must stop sponging on Dietz. He must stop playing this comedy of make-believe. He had told his parents that he was nicely started in the Deutsche Bank at a salary of 800 marks a month, that the directors held out the best prospects for him. "Perhaps," ventured his mother, a gleam of hope in her sad eyes, "You may have occasion at the bank to speak of papa's capabilities." God!

To listen to that—and to keep piling on more lies! On his next visit, the white-haired man had taken him aside—he, too, plays his little rôle; one can't very well let a son know one has reached the last extremity. "Mother tells me you stand well with the directors. For my part, I shan't mind if you put in a word for me—A man like me, in the prime of life, how can I consent to go on the shelf?" And he had promised everything. His throat tightened. He was a miserable liar, afraid to tell the truth. The truth would only make things worse. His mother must be looking to him for support. One day she had confided in him: "He pretends his leg is all healed. But the doctor insists he has diabetes. How can I keep him on a diet? It's too *costly!* His groans in the night keep me awake—and I mustn't let him know I hear; that would only make it harder for him."

Fred stared absently at the letters. Suddenly, he dug his knuckles into his burning eyes, groped toward the window and bent far out. In the middle of the yard stood a linden tree. It lit up the shabby walls of the stone enclosure like a miracle. Noisy sparrows chased one another and scolded in its branches. In the bird houses, the starlings were nesting.

"Soon things must take a turn for the best," Fred told himself.

In walked Dietz.

As each had something to hide from the other, their greetings were unusually hearty. Dietz snatched up the letters.

"Watch them scramble! I knew it had to come!"

He straddled his chair, gave his hat an expectant tilt, and magnanimously permitted Fred to open the letters. They read on. Each moment the stillness grew heavier. Dietz saw

the sheets in Fred's hands tremble. When they finished reading, Fred again sought the window, and fastened his gaze on the linden.

Dietz sat motionless. So! These were the answers to the stacks of letters in which they had offered themselves, too rashly perhaps, with extravagant promises of untiring labor, faithfulness—everything; in which they only incidentally had mentioned their service to the Fatherland. Three firms wished to know the amount of capital at their disposal; the insurance company asked for men without pay, on a commission basis, with promise of a salary after three months; *Die Hilfe* urged them to subscribe; the moving picture concern undertook to train talented young men for the usual fee; the mail order house——

Yes, the mail order house touchingly acknowledged its obligations to society. It deplored the economic hardships borne by "the best people of the country," it stressed the need of a national conscience, and pledged itself to do its share. The upshot of the letter: the gentleman seeking a position should buy a little book, *Order by Mail*, ridiculously priced at 10 marks, guaranteed to initiate one into the mysteries of the business world. An enclosed catalogue listed the merchandise sure to make the inquirer rich in an incredibly short time. Only the purest altruism prompted this offer. Any man of judgment would consider the price negligible. And it wound up with the request that the worthy gentleman let the undersigned know by return mail what he had decided to handle: the cure for falling hair, the reducing cream, the bust-developer, or the Oriental wonder lotion for red noses. Fabulous profits were assured. There was no question of any risk. Thousands of testimonials were

at their disposal, and communications would be regarded as strictly confidential——

"The dirty swine!" With a forced, bitter laugh, Dietz at last broke the silence. "We ought to feel flattered! They take us for good pickings——"

Fred faced him slowly. He looked old and tired. His voice was lifeless.

"You see now why I was afraid. We've written to at least a hundred places. What's the good? Yesterday, circulars on foreign languages and booklets from commercial schools. I'd take a course if I had the money to tide me over—I know you're in the same fix——"

Dietz flared up, "Why——"

Fred refused to listen. "I'm not blaming you for deceiving me. But when you secretly sell your watch, sell it for a song——"

"What do you mean?"

"I can understand your keeping it from me," continued Fred, "But you can't expect that fellow Pretz to hold his tongue. This afternoon, when I stepped out to buy a smoke, I met him. He was quite overcome by your stupidity. He said if you intend to sell any more——"

Dietz sprang up, made for the door, swung about savagely—"Well, what of it?"

"I only want to say that we've got to change our tactics—" He evaded his friend's eye. "Neither of us has a right to wait any longer!"

"Good! We'll station ourselves along the Friedrichstrasse, tie a placard around Pit's neck; *Utterly Destitute*——"

"I'm not joking!"

"You call that a joke?" His voice became hoarse. "When I declare myself ready to take my hat off to every passerby

who had the good sense to preserve himself for his Fatherland—you call that a joke? And who knows? A cur whose half-rotting carcass got him his exemption—who now belongs to a firm that bought two pieces of property during the war—might have a bit of change to spare—" Clutching the back of a chair with both hands—"And you call *that* a joke? God!" He pounded his forehead with his fists. "If I could only have foreseen it all—15,000 feet above the earth —my childish delusion, 'How beautiful it is down there!' I would have stopped the engine—and death would have been a sweet delirium. It always had to be my rotten luck to land safe—in the pink of condition——"

Now Fred knew how matters stood with Dietz. He had never suspected that it was as bad as this. He knew Dietz had heart trouble, brought on by his flying, and that the staff physician had warned him against emotional excitement. He was prepared to go to any length to quiet him.

"Listen Dietz—Don't try to shake me off that way; I only want to make a proposal, can't you see that? For once, do as I say! Until now I've always followed your lead——"

Dietz breathed with difficulty, and hastily swallowed a glass of water. It was he who now stood by the window and gazed out at the green linden. And again he saw before him a pair of kindly eyes behind shining spectacles, and outstretched arms closing tight, tight around him. It was eight days after Skaggerak; he had just been made an ensign —"God"—his teeth closed in a grinding vise. "I'm glad he saw me for the last time like that. If he could see me now, his heart would break——"

That evening Dietz agreed to Fred's plan. Early the next morning they were to go from one automobile repair shop to another on the chance of finding work.

In a few days they were taken on by Kogel & Co., Export and Import, at one hundred marks a week.

"You're both in luck," said Herr Kogel, "only this morning my porter was caught between two bumpers at the railroad terminal, and had his chest crushed. And yesterday morning, another, who had stolen some money, was arrested just as he was leaving for work. *That's* where I show no mercy! Nowadays, especially, every house of good standing must demand from his workmen the strictest honesty. If I should find that you have helped yourself to even the smallest nail——"

"We were officers in the Navy!" Fred stiffened and turned pale. Dietz replaced his papers in his breast pocket and lifted his chin high, reconciled already to the loss of his new position before he had even stepped into it.

"It was quite superfluous to answer that!" he observed.

"Tommy-rot," laughed Herr Kogel good-naturedly, as he settled back in his leather arm-chair, his legs outstretched, an important cigar between his thick fingers. The two stood facing him with the bearing of subordinates at attention, ready to receive his commands. "Before I hire you I may as well give you some plain talk. Get this right from the start. We are straight Republican here, and titles and rank don't count with me! I'm an up-to-date man, and don't you forget it!"

He pressed a button on his desk. A hungry-looking, stoop-shouldered bookkeeper appeared, meekly listened to his master's orders, looked with misgiving at the two erect figures, and led them to their posts: Fred to a cubby-hole next his own office, and Dietz to the workshop.

"So—you're the new handy man!"

"Yes." He had no end of confidence in his overalls rolled

in a bundle under his arm. He always had worn them when he looked after his machine in the hangar. He had never relied on the men. The neck at stake was his own.

"And your name?"

"Dietz Reuter."

"Your former occupation?"

Dietz turned red. "Herr Kogel has seen my papers."

The bookkeeper understood the rebuke, and took cover in his rôle of superior. He had to stomach every whim of his employer, and was expected to agree with him always; he was treated like a dog whenever Herr Kogel had dyspepsia, he was permitted at no time to express an opinion; so he squared matters for himself by taking it out on those under him—the handy man, the errand boy, and the second bookkeeper. And since he lived in the constant fear that some one would some day elbow him out of his job, he saw to it that this second bookkeeper remained ignorant of the day's transactions and that the other two kept well out of Herr Kogel's path. Small wonder then, that since the newcomers had contrived their high-handed entry into the presence of the chief himself, he was prejudiced against them from the start.

He sullenly led Dietz down the creaking stairs to the shop. The farther down he descended, the higher he held his head; and the longer he reflected on Reuter's last answer the more bitter he became.

"You will sweep the stairs," he snapped. Judging by the accumulation of dirt and refuse, the stairs had not been swept for weeks.

"Yes, Herr—Bookkeeper."

"Schmidt," yelled the man in mounting anger. "Herr Schmidt if you please!"

"Yes, Herr Schmidt. Where shall I find the broom and dustpan——"

Was it the even tone that goaded the little man, or was it the calm way the youngster took orders which nettled him? Herr Schmidt swung about. "Do you think that we have some one extra to hand you things? Hunt up your own rubbish!"

Dietz looked at the man. Strange that he should suddenly be reminded of the deck officer whom the cadets had christened "Isegrimm." This man had the same long narrow nose, the same small slanting eyes—always smarting under insult.

"Yes, Herr Schmidt."

"And if you think you have it soft here—guess again!" cried the bookkeeper, enraged at the sudden discovery that his new underling was so much taller than he.

"You will not talk *that* way to me," said Dietz. "If you have a complaint to make, go to Herr Kogel."

Schmidt stood there open-mouthed. Dietz walked past him down into the yard.

"Throw off the past!" It rang in his ears— "Rise like a Phoenix out of the ashes!" This means: "Hold your tongue!" Well, here he was. He must make good—To test himself out, he walked up to a group of workmen who were deep in a political discussion, exchanging their heated opinions on Noske, the man of the hour.

Dietz raised his hand briskly to his cap. It was his old service cap from which the cockade had been carefully ripped off.

"I'm the new handy man," said he, "I've had orders to sweep the stairs. Where can I find a broom?"

A silence. Six pairs of eyes, mistrustful, narrow and

searching, rested on the stranger. The workers of Kogel & Co., including the fourteen-year-old errand-boy, inspected their employer's latest choice. Their hands remained stuck in the pockets of their blue overalls, their short pipes between their teeth. The boy alone smoked a cigarette.

"Who are you?" asked a man in a blue sweater. He had a stately paunch, a double chin, and looked like the foreman.

"The new handy man," said Dietz.

"You look it!" piped the youngster.

"And you've already got an order?" asked the foreman in mock earnest.

"Yes, sir, from Herr Schmidt."

The men grinned, looked about them, but the bookkeeper was not to be seen.

"If you're workin' down here, you're with us, and Herr Schmidt has no orders for you. Understand?" said a small-ish man in field gray.

"And if Kogel thinks he can plant a spy on us—he's got another think comin'," added another.

"Looks like his old tricks again. Hiring hands! That's up to the council," said the foreman.

Noske was done for. The new handy man became the issue. The errand-boy walked around him, examined his clothes, tugged at the shirt front of one member of the group and got up on his toes to whisper in the latter's ear:

"It's navy stuff! If he didn't crook it, he's one of 'em!"

But the foreman thought it best to dispose of Dietz in his absence. He grudgingly drew his hand out of his pocket and pointed his thumb to the corner of the yard.

"The broom's there."

Dietz fetched the broom, swept the steps and once more approached the foreman.

"I'd like something to do."

Again he had interrupted the gentlemen. They were standing before a half-smashed auto-truck, speculating on its future; the errand-boy had just given his verdict: "When the motor gets going, and the driver's seat has a new cushion, it'll pass for a Mercedes."

"He's after more work!" guffawed the one in field gray. "Maybe we had the revolution to put a rush on Kogel's autos."

Just then some one in the group coughed. They scurried in all directions. One began to hammer, another to file, a third to drill.

Dietz found work enough. Everything in the yard lay as it had come in from the street. The former handy man had not gone in for much orderliness. The fact was, he had had no time—he had belonged to the council. But tastes differ. And if it gave the new man any pleasure——

He took off his coat and hung it on a nail. And after a little hesitation——

"May I ask a question?"

"Go ahead," said the foreman.

"What is this business anyway?"

The fat man gave a laugh.

"Why—profiteers! Kogel is in second hand autos, and his wife in foodstuffs. That's how you get Kogel & *Company*. Though to give the devil his due, the woman is even more of a hog than the man. They began with fake cream in a grocery shop, and to-day they own two apartment houses on the Kurfürstendamm. No wonder you're staring!"

It made Dietz laugh, as it always did, to hear who had gathered the golden laurels of The Great War. He rolled up

his shirt sleeves, and in the presence of the expert onlookers, threw himself into his task.

In a jumbled heap lay rusty machine parts, old wagon bodies, smeared-up boxes, and tangled skid-chains. The ground was littered with rotting cigar butts, tin cans, stinking garbage of all sorts, accumulated since the founding of the shop. While Dietz noisily cleared up the mess, his healthy disposition showed itself. It made him feel good to hear iron fall jangling upon iron; he liked the sound his hammer made in breaking up the corroded junk. It helped to stifle something within him that groaned. It quelled that inner protest he did not wish to hear, positively did not wish to hear. A car with its rear axle broken stood not far from another with a smashed hood. Near the side wall was huddled some plunder from Charlesroi, beside an engine whose water-jacket was ripped open; and in the farthest corner, between a three-wheeled munitions wagon and a riddled mail car, was an aeroplane.

Dietz crossed the yard and stood in front of it. His arms hung limp at his side. With one glance he appraised the fall that had nosed the machine into the sand, and the crash that had bent and twisted the strong iron, tearing out the wires, cables and tubing and twisting them into the disgusting mass before him. It must have been a death-plunge, with little left of the flier. But perhaps that last flight of his had been a victory. Perhaps, he had died in a frenzy of triumph, as he saw the troops hurl themselves forward and heard their shouts of victory.

Oh, how much he envied that lucky man, spared the nausea and disgust of these days! The other had taken leave of his comrades amidst laughter and shouts and cheering,

setting out to win like a knight, to meet his knightly foe in hand-to-hand combat!

Dietz bent to his task again. But now when the old iron fell jangling, he winced in pain. And when it clanged, he heard only a groaning and a whimpering. And when he looked at the broken and shattered war-implements about him, he saw the symbol of his broken Fatherland.

"How do you like it?" asked Fred, as he and Dietz were leaving the shop.

"First rate!"

"How did you make out with the men?"

"Great!"

"And the work?"

"Suits me fine!"

"What do you say to it?"

"You mean Kogel & Co.?"

"*No!* Whether I was right in making the proposal."

"Decidedly! It was a great idea!"

Fred stuck two fingers between his neck and collar.

"You can understand that I feel a bit responsible. I'd hate to think that I had gotten you into something distasteful. As for me, I'm entirely satisfied——"

Dietz threw him a sidelong glance.

"That is to say," added Fred, "for the beginning."

"Of course—of course——"

"We knew right along that we'd have to turn over a new leaf."

"That's what I say! In the long run, it amounts to the same thing. Whether the firm's name is Kogel or Veilchenfeld—we're the scapegoat, anyway. The main thing is how did Pit get through the day!"

And that was the truth. For, all through the day, when

Dietz thought of Pit, he felt uneasy. The little fellow was like a part of him. That morning, while preparing to go out, he had mistrusted his own voice as he commanded: "You're staying home!" There, before the door, ears pricked, his little bobbed tail joyously beating the floor, sat Pit. His dancing eyes had followed every move his master made. He watched Dietz pour water into the bowl, and ration out his food. He knew what that meant—Dietz did not look at him, though he heard his tiny halting steps falter to the place by the sofa. He knew that when the door was shut, the little fellow would roll up and snuggle there—and would neither eat nor drink until his master's return. He could never confide in any one how he suffered whenever Pit suffered; nor could he admit, even to himself, that like a boy, he looked forward to his home-comings, when Pit, with human-sounding cries, would jump up on him, lick his hands and rub up against him. Pit was something alive to come home to.

Fred said he was going to his parents.

"It will be more like it to talk to them, now that there's something to talk about," said he. "I wonder if they believe my lies."

Dietz laughed. "Not much, Fred; you're not a good liar."

And they parted laughing.

The odor of heavy perfume met Fred at the door as he greeted his mother. She looked really happy.

"I'm so glad you've come, Fred. Grandfather is here!"

That he knew. For in the hall, beside a woman's silk-lined wrap, hung the general's war regalia. It was the boast of the seventy-six-year old warrior that never, not even for a day, had he ever worn civilian dress. Even in the days of the revolution, when his comrades had been in such a

shameful hurry to rip their name-plates from the house doors, and to hide away their uniforms lest it be suspected that they had ever worn the Kaiser's coat, his Excellency in full uniform and wearing his decorations of the year 1870, had purposely showed himself in public. True, it was on the little balcony on the fourth floor, for his daughter had locked the hall door to prevent her reckless papa from going out.

"Our two soldiers are still in there, debating the issues of the war," said Frau von Stauffen smiling. "But your father is a changed man!"

"He's feeling well?"

"Not worse!"

"And otherwise?"

"Something in view—but don't say anything in front of Grandfather."

That's how they played their game of hide and seek. They could not bring themselves to share their fears. From earliest childhood, they had learned to face every struggle alone; and to this day, they hugged the maxim of Frederick the Great: The Fatherland first, then the individual! As for the old general, his one regret was that his regiment, at the outbreak of the war, had marched away without him. But how could he have led them in his wheel-chair? That was the year the gout had gotten the best of him. When he was better, he might have been seen, day after day, leaning on his stick, hobbling through the War Administration Building. He wanted to die in harness.

"I wonder what he'll say when he sees me," thought Fred, uneasily, as he stepped into the room.

He greeted the two soldiers in military fashion, heels clicking, head erect, conscious of his own new hair-cut.

His father's eyes met his with joy, and they shook hands heartily. The colonel wore his fatigue jacket, the Iron Cross of distinguished service on his breast, but the old general sat motionless. He never had concealed the fact that his grandson forfeited his sympathies the day he enlisted in the navy. To the old army man, the navy was a red rag. It was grim comfort to him that the navy had put Germany in her present fix.

"So! Is this the man of the future?" challenged the general. His glance stopped short at Fred's hair, then contemptuously swept the rest of him. Not even the colors in his buttonhole! With bitterness in his voice, he at last said: "Well, well—that's how we look when we make money!"

Fred had to laugh against his will; and so, the ice was broken.

The colonel joined in the laughter, and from the next room came the voices of the women. Tante Maria was there too, the gentle spinster whose life was taken up with the care of her father. And a strange young woman.

"Are you really earning so much money now?" asked Fred's aunt, after he had greeted her. She could not quite believe that he was capable of such a thing.

"Tante Maria, don't let them tell you fairy tales!" He looked at the strange young woman.

"But Fred, I think that's splendid! I've been wishing I could earn some money myself!"

Already sorry for what she had said, she turned to the visitor, who was holding the family album on her knee and staring at Fred with wide eyes. Maria introduced him.

"Frau Waldow."

His mother urged him to sit down. He sat down willingly, too tired to brave his grandfather's heckling.

"You remember," said Tante Maria, "my speaking of Frau Waldow? She used to help me out when I did not know what to give grandfather to eat——"

No, he did not remember, but he pretended to be grateful, and managed a few polite words to Frau Waldow, aware that her mouth was very ordinary, her nose a bit coarse, and her manner altogether artificial. She seemed to be flattered to find herself in such good company, and took pains to hide her lack of ease. When she put her tea-cup to her lips, she stuck out her little finger absurdly, and confided that her life-long wish always had been—some day—to learn to ride a horse.

"I am so glad that I've met you at last," she said to Fred. "Your aunt has told me so much about you—from the time you were a baby—and what a hero you were in the war. Honestly now, how many ships did you really and truly sink? Do tell how it's done. I always wanted to hear it first hand——"

Fred stiffened and drew in his long legs. It was a decidedly uncomfortable position.

"You must excuse me—those are things I wish to forget!"

"How funny," tittered Frau Waldow still staring at him with her large eyes. And Fred thought even the eyes were ordinary. Their moist glitter left him cold. He was annoyed to see his mother, who had brought a cup for him, stand behind the woman's chair and affectionately place her hand on her shoulder.

"We want to tell you right away, Fred—I can't keep it to myself any longer—" his mother said. Amazed, he listened to the changed voice that had lately been so sad and colorless. A glance into the next room assured her. The men were too busy with their post-mortems of lost battles to

hear what she said. 'Do you mind if I tell, Frau Waldow?" —She took her sister's hand and squeezed it heartily. "Tante Maria told the Gnädige Frau that papa was anxious to take up some line of business, and since, strictly speaking, he has no connections——"

Fred felt his face grow hot. Couldn't this old maid here ever hold her tongue? How had she come to lay bare his father's misery? Lay it bare to a stranger——

"And just think! Frau Waldow immediately told her husband——"

"He's a lieutenant in the reserves!" cut in Frau Waldow.

"—And through his connections at the bank, he has placed your father. Isn't that wonderful? And she was so happy about it, that she wanted to tell us herself! And thanks to Frau Waldow, your grandfather and Tante Maria have paid us a visit."

She gave Fred the cup. Her hand trembled.

But Fred felt as if his face had been slapped. A stranger—

"How kind Gnädige Frau—" shame burned his cheeks. He thought of Dietz. If only *he* could have helped! And he thought of the First Officer: 'Forget the past!'—"But my father cannot possibly—I mean—he is unable—it's beyond me, Tante Maria, that you should have imposed upon strangers!"

Frau Waldow looked at him reproachfully.

"But my dear lieutenant, how can you say 'strangers'? My husband says that now we are all one family. Officers must stick together and help each other out!"

Maria sulked. "I can't see anything wrong in that!"

"But grandfather——"

He caught himself. Strange that he should forget that his grandfather, with his military dignity and exalted rank, was

no longer a shield for the family pride. That this woman should place his father under obligation to her was unthinkable.

Tante Maria's face flushed. She recalled her father's words: "When you've taken off the Kaiser's coat, it makes no difference what you do. You're through with life—!" Fred could not help suspecting that this little nobody here, this intruding stranger, had taken all these pains in order to meet better people. She's too vulgar, thought he, and harps too much on my lieutenancy. A cheap climber—But he did not know that many an egg, many a sausage from the benevolent pantry of this vulgar woman had come to the family's rescue. How else could Maria have given her father decent food, while the rest of Berlin starved? Of course, the old general had strictly forbidden her to procure even one ounce of anything above the ration-card's allowance. "When great hardships are demanded of the people, we must set a good example! What if it *is* true that every week there is a per capita waste of 120 grams of margarine and 50 grams of butter—all the more reason why *we* should hold out!"

That's what Tante Maria had told the little woman the first time they had met in the public soup-kitchen. For, of course, they were both doing their bit. And Frau Waldow called it an act of Providence that just that very day her husband should have given her 10 pounds of lard and as much butter from the army stores. There sprang up between the two women a regular butter-and-sausage friendship. And Maria thanked God that she was at last able to add a little fat when she stewed her dried fruit and turnips, while Frau Waldow talked to the whole neighborhood about her dear old friend, His Excellency!

And now, she sat chilled before the aloofness of His Excellency's grandson! The air in the room had become icy. Tante Maria still sulked, while a change was coming over her sister, who only a minute ago had been chattering so light-heartedly about her two sons and of the time they were little boys, showing their pictures and laughing over their pranks. Suddenly she grew dumb. The album still lay on Frau Waldow's knee. The visitor was awkwardly turning over its pages. She looked trapped.

Fred asked, "May I relieve you of the book?" and quickly placed it on the table.

"It's no bother to me—" Frau Waldow stammered—not suspecting how her words stabbed both mother and son. She sprang up, reached for her silver purse and white kid gloves——

"I really must go——"

"Wait a while; we can all go together," begged Tante Maria. She feared to remain with Fred.

But the little woman teasingly shook her head.

"I think the Herr Lieutenant is angry with me. That's why I'm frightened away. Please, Gnädige Frau, keep your seat—I'll find the way alone—" She put her hand out to both women and bolted away like a panicky child, startling the two men who sat grimly over the plans of the first attack on the Marne.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said as she broke in upon them with her confused giggle. "Please don't get up! I only want to say good-by—and good luck to you, my dear Colonel, in your new profession. I am so glad——"

She reached the corridor and with great difficulty fought back her tears.

There stood Fred holding her velvet wrap. She tossed back her head.

"Don't bother about me!"

She stepped to the mirror and tied her veil over her big hat with fumbling fingers. Defiantly. Challengingly. Without a glance at Fred. Now that his mother's eyes no longer rested on her, she was herself again. She'd show him now that he meant nothing to her.

This amused Fred. A girl he once knew in a certain port came to his mind. A cute little trick, a lot like this little Frau. The night he first met her she went through these same dramatics—then in the end laughingly threw herself into his arms. He felt again that hour of madness, the kisses, the embraces, the perfume of her tumbled hair. Perfume like that came from this one too.

As he held her cloak, his fingers toyed with the softness of the lining. And suddenly he had a crazy desire to bury his face in it, drink in the fragrance it had enfolded, and again kiss silken coils of hair——

"May I trouble you, Herr Lieutenant," said Frau Waldow flouting her politeness. "But look out for my sleeves—they wrinkle so——"

He held the sleeves of her dress over her arm as she slipped into her coat. He felt the warmth of her skin and the soft curves of her shoulders. The rich odor she gave out overpowered him—His eyes fastened on her smooth white neck——

Without offering her hand, without a word of leave-taking, she made for the door. He followed, feeling in his pocket for the key to the elevator.

"Permit me, Gnädige Frau——"

Her gold-brown eyes flashed through the veil.

"Don't trouble yourself!"

He silently unlocked the elevator door; with a comical hauteur she stepped in. When the door had banged shut, she stood tense with expectation. They descended slowly. Fred did not look at her.

When he opened the front door, she laughed.

"What in the world did I ever do to you, Herr Lieutenant?

He did not know. At that moment he knew nothing about his outraged feelings, or about the uninvited stranger who had thrown herself upon the family. At that moment, he was aware only of the woman before him.

"Gnädige Frau is mistaken," he said with great effort.

"Really? I'm mistaken?" In an instant, her face lit up. "But you didn't give me a single friendly word! And I was so glad I could bring *you* such good news!"

"Me?"

"I mean *all* of you! But now I'm sorry that I came—and I'll never come again——"

"My parents would be sorry——"

"But you wouldn't care——"

Yes, it was that unmistakable voice, that same bold, provocative voice he had once heard long ago. And this one's lips were cherry-red too.

"I don't understand how Gnädige Frau can believe——"

"Then *auf wiedersehen*," said she, and slipped past him.

He turned back slowly. In the elevator the cloud of perfume stifled him. His blood mounted as he realized that a moment ago he had been alone with her here in this little enclosure. In the hall upstairs her scented handkerchief lay on the rug. He picked it up, held it tight for a moment in his closed hand and stealthily put it into his coat pocket.

The family talk had become lively. Now that they were among themselves, His Excellency held forth loudly on the lost battle. Near them, with her crocheting, sat Tante Maria, with lips tightly pressed together, listening to what her sister had to say in Fred's defense. Maria was the picture of a disillusioned old maid. Her black and white shirt-waist was closed high at the neck; she had a queer talent for finding the most unbecoming garments to put upon her graceless, bony body. There was no one in whose eyes she wanted to look well. Her every thought was centered on her father's health. Not out of filial love alone, but in the bitter knowledge that on the day he closed his eyes for the last time, she would be left alone. Her mother's long illness had used up a fortune; and there could be no economizing in the care of her father. Once, in his gruff way he had told her that, after his death, she would have an income of 2170 marks a year, while he as a young lieutenant had had only 75 marks a month. She had kissed his hand and spent the rest of the night weeping, so overcome had she been by his goodness.

Frau von Stauffen held out her hand to her son.

"My dear big boy, let me say hello to you! You looked so happy when you first came in, and then you became as forbidding as your grandfather!"

He bent over her hand and kissed it.

"When one is taken so unawares——"

"Yes, I know. But she brought us such a happy surprise! It's a long time since I've seen your father so gay——"

"I only meant well by it," whimpered Tante Maria as she dried her eyes.

Fred felt harassed. He looked from one to the other. He had come to make peace with himself, to make a clean

breast of everything—to confess the true state of his affairs —how he had been driven to accept the first position that had presented itself. Should he now stand in judgment over his father who was in the same predicament?

"Tell us something, Fred," said his mother.

He passed his trembling hand over his eyes.

"I'm hungry, Mother."

She hurried out, happy to wait on him.

The colonel was really in a good humor. As soon as the visitors left, he turned to Fred and discussed his new prospects.

"The pay amounts to nothing," said he, "A salary of 250 marks a month, but the little vixen says I can earn overtime pay."

"The main thing is, do you like banking?" asked Fred.

His father seemed not to hear. He lifted himself up heavily. His wooden leg bothered him, and to-day he felt the twinging and twitching in the stump that meant a change of weather. He walked slowly to the tall clock and wound it up.

"I mean," continued Fred, "are you good at figures?"

A curt laugh broke from the colonel.

"No, my boy. Hardly. But I'll practice up. In a pinch I can add and subtract. But that confounded percentage——"

"You will learn it quickly, Father!"

"That's what I say. I regard the whole affair as a stepping-stone. Of course I have to bind myself for three years, but why not? After three years, I'll know something, and then I'll have clear sledding before me. You can't expect the banks to pay big salaries to people who want to get experience. In the meantime, something may turn up; and as

I said, the overtime is good. I hear that even generals and admirals have applied for these jobs——"

That was no news to Fred. He had heard it from the first officer, whose brother was a director of a large bank that had lately installed discharged officers in its departments. He had offered to speak for him and Dietz, but had tactfully withdrawn when Dietz asked him how one could exist on the pay.

"It looks to me," Dietz had said, "as if that bank is out to cut its pay roll. Why don't the service men get the same pay? They do the same work."

But that was something the first officer could not answer——

And here was this broken man ready to drag himself to the bank, day after day, to give the last of his strength, for what? The thought of what it would mean for his father to sit next to snickering boys and take orders from youthful superiors; what it would mean for him at his time of life, after he had turned grey in the service, after he had given his life blood for his country—the thought maddened him. He knew well enough that many were begging for the position, that for every position there were hundreds of jobless men, and that the newspapers, in long editorials, were in the habit of praising the humane bank directors. Good God—to think! One-time officers as apprentice bank clerks!

In his forced mood, the colonel limped up and down the room.

"It's really a great chance for me—I shall get to know something of business life, and develop a sympathy for the world of affairs. And I'll be able once more to speak of a regular day's work. I should only like to know, though,

how you came to fall into such a fine position right from the start——

Fred became red in the face.

"How? With me it was largely a matter of bluff! I simply told them I knew everything. It was *their* lookout if they believed me. But I couldn't last. Soon enough I was found out—and I suffered the consequences—but to-day I joined the export firm of Kogel & Co. . . ."

"Boy!" cried the colonel startled and almost envious, "that's immense! The very thing I'd like myself! What line?"

"Automobiles—" said Fred, making a comical effort to appear important.

His father stood looking at him.

"Yes," said he slowly, "you have to be young. Then the world belongs to you! At my age, it's no use——"

He went to the window and stood sadly gazing at the evening sky—It seemed to him he was like old iron—like rusty old iron——

III

On the staff of Kogel & Co. there was one person who counted for something. That was the errand-boy, Menne. Though he had already been confirmed, he was no bigger than a boy of nine. It was not this that set him apart. For thanks to the turnip years of the war, there was a large enough crop of puny undernourished bodies like his. What he lacked in size, he made up in bellicose touchiness. This had much to do with the huge brown sweater to which he had fallen heir at the death of his father, a giant of a man. The boy agonized in this sweater which was like a monstrous bag, and it took great skill to distribute its fulness over his body. Inasmuch as a good part of it was tucked into his pants, this gave him a gnome's belly, while his thin, childlike arms dangled from the sleeves, which were rolled up high into bulging rings. His cap, too, had once been his father's, and though he stuffed it with paper, it always slid down over his ears. But woe to any one who laughed at him; upon that rash head would descend a flood of language, while shrieks and yells summoned his sympathizers; for he looked like the oppressed minority in need of defense.

The men lent him a hand whenever his childish strength gave out. And at their councils, too, he had his place—most of all at breakfast. Since the revolution, breakfast played an important part. One arrived at eight o'clock, leisurely laid out the tools for the day; and then, since it was hardly worth while to start anything before breakfast, one waited until nine o'clock, when he sat down with the rest. Menne

would thereupon perch himself on an overturned packing case, pull out his crust of bread and his immense pocket-knife, and with great deliberation cut off big chunks and chew them with loud smackings. No one allowed himself to be disturbed during this ritual—not so much as to put down the coffee-pot when Herr Kogel called—that was out of the question.

"We're the bosses now!" Menne would swagger, stuffing his mouth with bread. "Down with capital!"

From the very first, the boy had mistrusted Dietz. Work like his looked suspicious.

"No use showing off in front of me!" shrilled Menne, as he watched Dietz nail up a packing-case with painstaking care.

"Run along," said Dietz, "Or I'll pin you under the hammer."

"I dare you!" screamed the boy. "And if you ain't in the Union, what are you doing here?"

This was the climax of breakfast on this particular day. For a whole week, the men had been observing the newcomer, watching him attack the jumbled heap in the yard; and they had come to the conclusion that they had had about enough of his airs, and that they did not have to put up with him. A *regular* workman joins the Union. Did they have the revolution so that things could go on as before? Their faces became hostile, and whenever Dietz approached, they turned away.

The bookkeeper was no better. In the morning, it enraged him to find his office in perfect order. Herr Kogel often said to him, with a wink, "Good team, those sailors. They set a pace for the rest." And when customers came to see him, it was not Herr Schmidt who was called to write the

orders, but Herr von Stauffen. With his polished manners he made a better impression than the little stoop-shouldered man. He had certainly made a better impression on Frau Kogel.

This Frau Kogel, ever since the day she had bought those two carloads of canned goods from the left-over army stores, "dirt cheap," and had gotten rid of them at a tremendous profit, had devotedly studied a book of etiquette, and had put herself into the hands of beauty experts. Fred's good points could not very long have remained hidden from her. She found it more to her liking to let him write her letters instead of Herr Schmidt. At such times, her face would take on a soft look, as her eyes fastened on Fred's thick blond hair.

"We'd be fools to stand for it!" Schmidt said one morning, to the woman who scrubbed the office.

"But if the old thing went and got stuck on him——?"

The bookkeeper bit his lips. His ruler trembled in his thin, parched fingers. "Then Kogel ought to know about it!"

As for the scrubwoman, it was all the same to her. She was there to scrub. She had no time for matters of the heart.

At first, Fred thought it very amusing to have found favor in Frau Kogel's eyes. He called her Potiphar's wife. He likewise found it amusing, when she summoned him to the outer office, to be aware of Herr Schmidt's eye at the keyhole. And when she meltingly held out her hand for him to kiss, he could hardly keep from laughing. She certainly was getting her money's worth out of her book of etiquette. But she had orders to give him too. "Take these

packages, Herr von Stauffen." Then he would accompany her home, nettled by the way people on the street looked at the strange couple. In spite of the white fox around her neck and the pea-size diamonds in her ears, a suggestion of manufactured cream still lingered about her.

When they reached her house, it was just as bad. She was still in the process of furnishing it. And since she was confining her purchases to stray bargains she happened upon, the pieces were not yet on speaking terms with each other. The little cabinet, a gilded what-not, stood by a so-called rococo sofa; the massive walnut dining table with its red plush cover was surrounded by six high-backed, tortuously carved mahogany chairs whose green satin damask appeared perplexed in such company; while on the walls, in heavy frames of gold, hung the pictures of kindly grandfathers and grandmothers, to give an effect of ancestry.

"Sit down, Herr von Stauffen."

He sat down stiffly on a damask chair.

"Will you have a little Schnapps?"

He had no objection. He was deeply touched when he saw what the modest little cabinet really held;—Bardinet, Steinhäger, Chartreuse, Benedictine, Cognac, Curaçao——

"Gnädige Frau seems to be a judge of good stuff."

"I should say," she laughed. "Don't I look it?" and drank a Benedictine with him. As she filled the glasses for the second time, the goodness of her heart was revealed.

"If you ever have words with my husband, just you come to me. He's a plain man, understand? Always making slips—can't help it. Fine people can't be expected to get used to that. Any one can see you come from a good family. Do your folks live here too?"

"No," said Fred.

"Who does your cooking then?"

He smiled with amusement.

"Reuter and I keep house together."

She fairly drank him in, all curiosity, astonishment and pity. A look of open satisfaction spread over her face as she held up the brimming glass in her hand.

"Your health then!" said she. They clinked glasses.

On his second visit, he had to eat sturgeon sandwiches. When he declined at first, Frau "Potiphar" became more explicit—more eloquent.

"Come on—eat, Herr von Stauffen. Look, we have it every day. We can afford it. But when do you ever get a chance?"

Yes. When did he? He thought of his wretched pay.

As he ate, she hung over him. This time she poured out Bardinet, and he drank with a relish.

"You have a girl, haven't you?" asked she.

"No, Gnädige Frau."

She gave a short laugh.

"Who'd believe it! A fellow like you——"

She came nearer. Her pudgy hand lay on his shoulder.

"Gnädige Frau, I assure you—" he became uneasy. She had already stroked his hair.

"You have to have some one——!"

Luckily the telephone rang. Kogel & Co. was wanted. Some one had a shipment of brown soap on hand, price still open. Frau Kogel became all business, and Fred escaped.

"This can't go on," said Fred to Dietz on the night of their first pay day. "The woman is getting rabid. To-day she slipped a safety razor into one of my pockets."

Dietz hummed a song. *"Wenn der Hund mit der Wurst über'n Spucknapf springt——"*

"And in the other, a hundred cigarettes——"

"—und der Storch den Frosch in der Luft verschlingt" Dietz warbled.

"Look here—can't you see——?"

Dietz lay on the sofa with the broken springs, his hands under his head. He did not stir, because Pit lay beside him asleep. But he sonorously declaimed: "And she took him up on a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and said unto him: 'All this power will I give unto thee; if thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine'— But she's not your type. She doesn't go with the scent in your jacket!"

Fred abruptly stopped pacing the room. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said, Fred. Your jacket smells a bit—to put it at a guess—a bit perverse—like a snub-nosed little cutey!"

"Do you mean," Fred flashed, "do you mean you've been spying on me?"

"Are you crazy?"

Fred attempted to explain himself; hemmed and hawed —Dietz stopped him.

"Drop it, Fred. Had I known that Kogel & Co. also handles perfumes I would have been more discreet—if only out of respect for my betters. One is so easily deceived, even a flier like me,—But a hundred cigarettes and a safety razor you say? Not so bad! Yes, his beauty was the cause of his downfall!"

Fred was relieved to hear this banter.

Dietz was stroking Pit's head. The dog had become thinner the last week, and his coat had lost its gloss. Dietz

took this more to heart than Fred's imperiled virtue. But he did Fred the favor of listening to his story. Fred told it with some uneasiness. About Frau Kogel. And her Bardinet. And how she had leaned over him that morning as he was making out an order slip. And how Herr Kogel had sent for him and said: "You leave my wife alone! She's no inventory!"

"As though one couldn't resist her," said Fred with disgust—and the scent on his coat appeared to have been forgotten.

Some one knocked. Pit growled, pricked his ears, then snuggled back against his master, when he saw it was only the landlady.

She was carrying a large covered platter. She placed it carefully on the table, and drew from her bosom a pink envelope.

"This was left for you at noon to-day."

Fred's heart was beating so violently that he forgot to ask how the Gnädige Frau felt, and it meant so much to her. She was a sergeant's widow, and always in a bad humor. On the gramophone in the parlor stood an urn with her husband's ashes.

"Why didn't you offer Frau Schulze a chair?" asked Dietz.

But she had already left, deeply offended, and Fred stood staring questioningly, first at the letter, then at the platter.

"It must be a tart——"

Shoving Pit aside, Dietz jumped up.

"You're a wonder! How'd you guess it?"

Pit's sensitive little nose sniffed the air greedily.

But Fred remained standing with the letter in his hand.

"Can't you read it, man!" cried Dietz. "That smell takes

me back to Kiel. Remember the pastry shop in the market place? Posters everywhere, *'Unsere Marine'* Posters. In front of me a gooseberry tart with whipped cream, Fred. I take it all back. Let me tell you, Kogel & Company has class! Kogel & Company is a regular firm! Any one who can make a tart smell like that has a soul! Look and see if it has cream—no, don't look! Will you believe it, I still owe Herr Hobreit for five portions of his tart?"

He sprang forward, removed the waxed paper, and stood entranced.

"Fred! Just the way I like it! Plenty of crust and none of your sickening stinginess. An elegant woman, Fred. Look at the cream! And you standing there like Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt!—I must say, I never thought Frau Kogel had it in her. I sized her up as belonging in the Frankfurter and sauerkraut class." And he sang in a ringing voice:

"Dir woll'n ir treu ergeben sein, getreu bis in der Tod,
Dir woll'n wir unser Leben weihn, du Flagge Schwarz-weiss-rot!"

Fred stepped to the window and read to himself:

"My highly honored Herr Lieutenant:

"I am celebrating my birthday with a few friends, and your dear aunt too. I wanted so much to ask you to join us, but the other day you were so horrid to me, that I was afraid of a refusal. To make you at least think of me, I am sending you a bit of my own handiwork. Hoping you will like it, I am, with best regards,

"Respectfully,

"Lia Waldow.

"P. S. When it's convenient for you, please send back the plate."

"That means I should bring it, of course," thought Fred. He suddenly felt himself relieved of a great strain. Now he knew that for days he had been waiting—waiting——

Dietz snatched up his dagger. "Don't make such a tragedy out of it," said he, cutting the tart. "Let your love for her be platonic. Dodge behind the marriage sacrament. Tell her that in the navy we had to take a vow of chastity. Oh, tell her any old thing—but just now, forget about your virtue!"

Fred laughed; laughed and flung out his arms and stretched himself. They sat down, and ate Frau Lia's tart with increasing relish. Pit had a piece of the crust and spoiled his stomach. When the platter was empty, Dietz felt some qualms. "What do you say if we look for another job?" he asked.

They made plans far into the night. It was their first frank exchange of opinion, and it turned out that they agreed in their estimate of Kogel & Co.

"But we'll have to give him regular notice," said Dietz, "or else he'll have something to throw up to us."

Strange. The repair shop the next morning wore a Sunday look.

The work stood untouched; none of the men had put in an appearance. The Party had called upon its members to march for the cause. Herr Kogel, in a very bad humor, was examining the junk in the yard—a thing he never ventured to do in the presence of his men—and railing against the absentees until the walls re-echoed—a thing he ventured, as a rule, even less. Holding his watch in his hand, he rushed over to Dietz. "You call that being on time!" It was two

minutes past eight. "Out of goodness and pity, one takes in the likes of you—then there has to be a parade! Did I hire a handyman in order to have to do things myself?"

Dietz recalled the gooseberry tart and felt only pity for the man confronting him. Poor devil! Besides, his life on board had inured him to tongue-lashings. He said calmly—"May I ask what I've missed?" and rolling up his sleeves, bared his muscular arms.

Kogel turned pale and stepped back.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"You just accused me of neglecting my duty."

Kogel changed color. His puffy face turned purple; his little eyes swept appealingly over the deserted yard.

"Who in the world," he yelled, "told you to turn the whole place upside down? A *pig* wouldn't feel at home here!" He kept his eye on the door.

"Sorry. The pig slipped my mind——"

"And the tires—did you hide them too? Think you'll get away with something? I tell you, you can't!"

"The tires are under the shed——"

"I don't care, you should have warned me about the men not showing up——"

"I had no orders to do so. I wasn't hired as a spy. I'm a porter!"

Kogel gasped for breath. He knew that his anger had nothing to do with the man who stood before him; he knew it had everything to do with the others, who stayed away and then had the brass to demand their pay. They knew that he would be afraid to start anything with them. Kogel did not dare say a thing to them. They knew too much about his business—that's why. But this fellow here, this nobody, was some one he *could* talk to. It felt good to

let it out on him—to show some one he was the boss! In his rage he roared in Dietz' face.

"And you'll polish my shoes—you porter, you!"

He dashed to the door and disappeared into the house.

Dietz felt his chin quiver.

So, the fine tart had an unpleasant after-taste. Was boot-blacking part of the game? He pondered, and saw himself in Kiel at the Kontinental Hotel. He rang three times for the house man. A polite, well-knit fellow appeared.

"Will you polish my shoes?"

"Gladly, Herr Lieutenant." He took them under his arm. "Shall I brush your clothes?"

"Thank you!"

The fellow did not take offense. He knew that no offense had been intended. "Rise up like a Phoenix out of the ashes"—he swallowed the lump that had risen in his throat and busied himself with a packing case.

But Herr Kogel felt decidedly better. He'd fix the beggar. The scamp wanted to attack him! He had even rolled up his sleeves! And talked back! You go and feed that rabble, and then they act as if they're doing you a favor! Want to lead you by the nose. Then your wife starts a fuss; all of a sudden she takes a dislike to baldheads and throws a fit when you eat with a knife—what, then, should you eat with? And she discovers that your belly is too big—that you should be massaged; and then she says, "Herr von Stauffen stands up straight like a Christmas tree, and you ought to copy his manners." "That's the limit," Kogel told himself as he stepped into the office.

The bookkeeper stood meekly at his desk, as he did every morning, looking over the mail; and just like every other

morning, as soon as the door opened, he rushed toward his chief to relieve him of his hat and coat.

"You didn't know, either?" Kogel bellowed.

"No, Herr Kogel, the notice was posted only last night."

"Then you should have phoned the house. We could have closed up. I'll close anyway! Why should *I* support a lot of loafers? Why should I take a loss? Other times your eyes are all over the place. Why didn't you nose out something this time?"

The pitiful little man twisted and tore at his bloodless fingers until the knuckles cracked. Every bit of color had fled from his yellow face.

"Those are reproaches I don't deserve, Herr Kogel! And while we're on the subject—I should like my release!"

Kogel fell back in his chair, and gaped at the man with round unbelieving eyes.

"Have you gone crazy?" Quick as lightning it flashed upon him—this man could, if he wanted to, use a lot of information against him! In ways that were mysterious, the bookkeeper had often procured export-permits by means of which his chief relieved the Fatherland of all sorts of goods, while the ultimate destination of these goods had been equally mysterious. It was the bookkeeper who had suggested that he rent the yard, back in the days when he was still a whipped-cream manufacturer, and that, on a certain night, he leave the gate unlatched and trust the rest to him. Then, as though by magic, the next morning, the yard had been full of army-gray motor cars. Herr Schmidt had received 20 bank notes for his trouble, and the export business had begun. And now—how could this man, who had always stood by him so faithfully, want to quit?

"Until a few days ago," continued Herr Schmidt, glanc-

ing at the door behind which Fred was copying letters, "until a few days ago, I was permitted to look upon myself as a trusted employee here. To-day I am superfluous. A whipper-snapper who doesn't even draw a decent day's pay gets preference——"

Kogel drew a breath of relief.

"Preference?"

"I have always stood up for the firm," Herr Schimdt's face turned ashen, "and no matter what any one said, I never betrayed anything. And now, you go and take in some one from the navy, who wants to know where you deliver and from whom you buy, and your wife pays attention to no one but this Herr von Stauffen, and I'm a nothing, and she doesn't like it when I'm there, and she makes eyes at him and brings him caviar sandwiches, and I get the brunt of it——"

"Caviar sandwiches——!"

"I know you like fair play, Herr Kogel; but I like fair play, too. A man can't help his feelings. If you want the navy to run your business, I quit. I'm too much of a man for that——"

The door opened suddenly, and Frau Kogel swept in.

"What's up," asked she. "Been bothered again?" and as her husband stood there, stunned by what he had heard, she came nearer—"Inspectors been here?" Her eyes shot over to the cabinets, and rested on the safe.

Kogel did not answer. He fixed his gaze on her. So! she was already carrying on with the newcomer! And the bookkeeper had had to tell him about it! Hadn't he himself suspected it, when he saw them go away together yesterday? And what was *this*! Since when did she have red hair? He bent forward to get a better look at her but said nothing

about his discovery. He remarked, instead, "I will not stand for your getting mixed up with that boy in there, understand? But if you think you can get more out of the hungry beggar, go ahead!"

She tossed her head defiantly.

Kogel lost control of himself. He felt he was choking.

"You never dyed your hair on my account!"

"What do you mean?"

She approached the mirror, took off her hat, and looked at herself. Her hair was faultlessly marcelled—and unmistakably red. He had never been jealous of her before. But the thought that, through her foolishness, he ran the risk of being betrayed by Schmidt, made him furious. He could have strangled her in cold blood.

"Somebody has put a bug in your ear," she said. She reached for the telephone. "Why shouldn't I have red hair; I can afford it—" She asked for a number—"This is Kogel & Co. I am sending my young man for the package—you know—" She hung up and looked at her husband again. "We ain't either of us got a kick coming. Now, now, don't get blue in the face. You know what the doctor said! Wouldn't it be funny if, on account of my red hair, you should croak—" She leisurely filled a glass with water and made him drink it. Then she slipped into the adjoining room, asked Fred the name of the perfume he was using, and sent him to Abendrot & Co. "They know already." When he answered over-politely and in a tone of cold formality: "At your service, Madam!" she looked at him reproachfully and turned her back on him. He had not yet reached the stairs, when a good-sized row between Kogel & Co. started. Herr Schmidt bent over his correspondence as if he heard nothing.

The street parade was on its way. Thousands upon thousands of workmen streamed toward the Reichstag building. Red flags and large posters announced the cause for which they marched. They came from all directions, with wives and children, old and young, disgruntled and contented. They marched with orderly and measured step, as long as they were divided into small formations, most of them being sedate-looking workmen. But when the procession swelled, and half-grown, howling boys carrying banners joined the ranks, there arose confused shouts and menacing calls. Passersby were jostled, well-dressed men and women on the sidewalks were insulted, soldiers who showed themselves, indiscreetly, were hooted at. Here and there, marching groups sang the *Marseillaise,* but were soon drowned out by hoarse, deep cries of "Down with Noske! Down with the Military!"

"Long live the Internationale!"

"Long live the Republic!"

"Long live the six-hour day!"

Men in uniform, who saw the parade, or heard it coming, quickly got out of its way and disappeared into side streets; motor cars, cabs and wagons of all kinds were held up and jammed together in a mass, from which issued torrents of abuse and profanity. Every man who wore the black and white ribbon of the Iron Cross in his button hole had to endure a broadside of invectives, among which the favorite seemed to be "Bloodhound!"

The staff of Kogel & Co. participated in all this festivity. The foreman earnestly discussed with another foreman the advantages of a six-hour day, but the younger ones gave vent to their enthusiasm more clamorously. And when, exhausted by their shouts and cheers, they ambled along in

silence until they could again summon further roars, the shrill voice of the errand-boy, Menne, crowed over the mob: "Down with Capital! Down with the white-collar gang!" He wore his huge balloon cap and a red bandanna around his neck, and his untiring screeches and quick eye for singling out objectionable onlookers fired the rest with zeal.

* * *

Was it fate that led a certain old man to come upon these youngsters? Through the Wilhelmstrasse, from the War Academy, came General Von Gleichen. He had just had a lively debate with a crony over the respective merits of the flank and phalanx attacks of Frederick the Great, and had made his point by turning to the fighter's own maps of the Battle of Rosbach. General von Gleichen's shabby gray military cape with its red facing was open, and exposed the cross of 1870.

His sword was caught up under his cloak, hidden from hostile eyes. Without it, the old soldier would not have stepped out on the street. His cap was pulled low over his forehead, his coat collar turned up—warmth alone relieved the pain at the base of his head.

The howling and hooting of the men, the laughter and shrieks of the women startled him. He saw the flutter of red banners; he saw a sea of heads. He saw scurrying marshals with red sashes, and heard the throaty, rhythmic cries: "Down with the Military! Down with Capital!"

A hot wave swept his temples.

"Look here," called a good-natured chauffeur, "you'd better go back! Those trouble-makers sometimes get nasty!"

"Does the old codger have to make a show of himself in his uniform?" loudly demanded a fat woman with a mar-

ket basket on her arm. Two men stepped in front of the general. "Turn back, Herr General," they said, "the temper of the crowd is too dangerous!"

His chin trembled. The bushy white eyebrows drew close together, the deep-set eyes looked sadly out upon the marchers, but he did not see them. For, like a vision, there rose before him a picture, gripping, unforgettable. On this very street, under these same lindens, an aged king once rode at the head of a band of heroes, surrounded by his generals. A din of frantic cheers had greeted the banners of Germany, a welcome of jubilant bells. On this very street, flowers had been strewn, and pretty girls in white dresses had held out their bouquets to the home-coming heroes. Bismarck had been there, and Roon, Moltke, and Blumenthal; the Crown Prince, too, his heroic figure like that of the legendary Siegfried. And then, the march of troops! And first, Lieutenant Gleichen himself, a bandage round his head, his arm in a sling, beside his battalion. "At-tention!" commands First Lieutenant Gleichen, as they reach the Brandenburger Tor, draped to the ground in flags. "Battalion—march!" And tap-tap, tap-tap, the march of parade. Eyes forward! What if the long unshaven beards of the battle-front make weird men of striplings! Tap-tap. Eyes moist? Don't get soft, boys! Tap-tap. The Fatherland is proud of you!

On this very street——

The old soldier did not hear the warnings about him. For the vision had faded, and instead of the victorious troops, he beheld the bawling mob, a mob that did not know what it was doing. In place of proud flags riddled in holy warfare, in place of captured banners borne at the head of regiments, he beheld the blood-red banner of the Revolution!

No. He could not turn back, now! He was rooted to the

spot. Dazed. His mind took in the fact that the glory of the Empire was no more. That he had lived his life in vain. He stared before him, in a trance, and pushed aside the two who tried to shield him——

Dumfounded, the marchers looked at the old soldier, his gray-white face like stone, his glance fixed and lifeless. A few stood still and stared. Was that a soldier's challenge? Was that defiance?

"What's *he* looking for?" One of the marchers nudged his neighbor, unable to hide his awe. He wore an army coat, and still had a trace of respect for his one-time superiors.

"If it ain't a bloodhound lookin' at us!" shouted a youngster, and commanded: "Eyes—right!"

And now they all saw him. They all saw the general with his hand on his sword, the iron cross on his breast. Saw that he was not afraid to stand before them in his garb of honor. Saw that this old man had not been driven to cover by the street mobs, but stood there confronting their banner of freedom, unafraid.

The stillness was broken. "How about some shooting?"

"Ludendorff," roared another.

"Noske gang!"

"Murderer of the masses!"

The calls became deafening. The flames of hate broke out. The Kaiser's coat had brought to hundreds of thousands nothing but death, crippled bodies, and misery. How dared it flaunt itself? It flared up at the marchers, the symbol of their betrayal. The line of march stood still. The men coming up from the rear were jammed in the press, craning their necks to see. Their first bewilderment was followed by indignation. Spasmodic calls swelled into a chorus of jeers.

"Bloodhound!"

"Mass-murderer!"

The staff of Kogel & Co. joined in the clamor, though they did not yet know what it was all about. They were in the middle of the formation, unable to see through the crowd.

"Lift me on your shoulder," screamed Menne to a man near him, "Let's have a look!"

And the tall man good-naturedly picked him up. Hardly had Menne perched himself like a monkey on the man's neck, when the ranks were pierced by the boy's shrill screech. "What do you know about that!"

"Quit your yelling!" roared the man, annoyed by the boy's wild jerks.

Menne was scarlet with rage.

"We kicked the whole caboodle out! What's he doin' here all dressed up?"

"Aw, let the old man be," pleaded a gray-haired workman.

But Menne had his sympathizers.

"Why put up with 'im?"

"Takes us for fools."

"Let me off!" screamed Menne, "Down with the military!"

And ten, twenty, fifty voices took up the cry.

"Down with the military!"

A crowd of youngsters pushed out of line, heedless of the marshals, and tore the rest with them, following a child with a tremendous balloon cap, a child whose thin pitiful arms hacked the air wildly.

"What did I tell you," the chauffeur called to the general—"It's not like before——"

"The fools haven't learned yet," cried the fat woman, afraid to betray her anxiety for the old man. "Look out! The brat!" She meant Menne, a grotesque goblin in his over-large sweater and red bandanna, as he led the rabble.

"Down with Ludendorff!"

"Down with the Noske gang!"

The onlookers who stood packed on the sidewalk fell back. Somebody pulled the old soldier by the sleeve——

"Come away——!"

"Grab his sword!" screeched Menne, tugging at the old man's cloak. "Can't show off to me! Let's have that dumb cross!" He pounced on the general like an ape, and hypnotized by the screams of the youngster, the rest followed, whipped into a frenzy of roars and curses.

The women dispersed, shrieking. The bystanders quickly retreated into doorways, alleys and side streets. Better see nothing; they must not bring the mob down upon themselves.

Around the old man writhed a savage mass. Half-grown boys mauled each other to get at him, to do their bit in making the Republic safe. Many of them, back in November, had joined the hunt for officers and had developed a zest for the sport. And they had come to look upon themselves as the saviors of the new order. What if their victim was an old man? The years of the war had killed all respect for age. And who would have dared stop them? The marshals had disappeared. The police, knowing they could only incite further trouble, remained in the background. Boys like that were calling themselves the Governing Party.

"This don't cut no ice with me!" shrieked Menne, as he tore the cross from the general's breast.

Did the old man say something? His bloodless lips moved. His face was distorted. His hand felt for his sword——

A hard fist struck his breast. He staggered back. Another wrenched away his sword——

"Bloodhound!" shrilled the boy, tearing the general's coat.

"Knock 'm cold!" bawled a man in the rear.

Was that a hand on the old soldier's throat? Did some one hit him? He felt nothing. He heard only a maddening din—then a sharp snap of metal. His heart stood still. They had broken his sword! His hands groped blindly.

Menne was the first to run away. And when two policemen came upon the scene, the march proceeded in good order under the springtime green of the lindens, the marchers singing lustily, *"Zu Mantua in Banden——"*

Herr von Gleichen was carried into a house. The good people enlightened him. They said it was a piece of foolhardiness and unheard of defiance for a militarist to confront the people. They spoke about the arrogance of the Junkers, about the sufferings of the common soldier at the front, and a good deal about mob-psychology.

An hour later, Herr von Gleichen was able to ride home. The physician who had been called to attend him, congratulated him upon his excellent heart, and jovially added: "Boys will be boys!" He felt offended when the old man neither offered his hand, nor utttered a word of thanks.

Straight as a die sat Herr von Gleichen in the open carriage. People gazed after him silently. There were a few among them who felt their cheeks redden with shame.

The distinguished cross of 1870 lay in the mud of the gutter.

He rode past the guard house; he rode through the proud arch of the Brandenburg Tor, once the scene of so much pomp and glory. He looked up toward the crown on the

Reichstag Building, the crown that he had helped to put there—and like a lament, something cried within him: All in vain!

Straight as a die sat the old soldier in the carriage. When he wanted to pay, the driver doffed his cap. He refused to take the money.

"I was once a grenadier, Excellency!"

Herr von Gleichen looked at him; a gleam in his lifeless eyes was awakened.

"And you liked being a soldier?"

"Yes, your Excellency! And if *I* had anything to say——"

The general's hand twitched. Something rang out in his benumbed heart. For a moment, for a brief, delicious moment, he forgot his torn cloak, his empty scabbard.

"I thank you," said the General. He lifted his hand to his cap, and looked into the tear-filmed eyes of the man on the box.

"I will remember that!"

He entered the house. He felt that in spite of everything, hope again walked with him. And the janitor remarked, later in the day, that he could swear the old gentleman smiled as he passed by him.

The smile remained. It softened the rigid features when his daughter found him towards evening, doubled over his writing desk before a picture of the old Kaiser, a bullet in his heart.

IV

At noon the marchers disbanded, and the workers of Kogel & Co. started for the shop. The foreman looked as if he could eat some one alive. He chewed on the end of a short pipe and spat out copious mouthfuls. His eyes flashed menacingly—on the lookout for some one.

Ten paces back of him came his men, linked arm in arm, obstructing the sidewalk and hoarsely singing: *"Ein Sohn des Volkes will ich sein und bleiben."* Menne trailed behind with a band of admirers. He was recounting his deed of valor, showing how he had landed his blows, and altogether looked upon himself as a David who had slain another giant. The more his listeners marvelled at him, the bolder became his speech, the longer his strides, and the more ferocious his appearance.

"They can't scare me," he piped, "if Noske ain't got the guts, we have to keep order. Down with the military!"

An automobile stood before the shop. The men surrounded it, ascertained its make, and inspected the engine, while the driver good-naturedly answered their questions. A Swedish captain owned the car. He and a party of men were paying a visit to Kogel & Co.

The workmen jostled one another and snickered, letting Menne shove in front of them to get a good look.

"A blind man can see that!" shrilled the boy. "A faked-up Opel forty-horse-power! Who in hell smuggled *that* through?"

The driver pretended not to hear, and the youngster felt squelched. But noticing the half-dozen boys within ear-

shot, he slipped back into his rôle, dug his fists into his pants' pockets, and then and there gave the driver a good piece of his mind:

"Can't fool me! I know your boss!—profiteer! That's what! Nothin' else ever comes to Kogel."

He wheeled about proudly, and followed by the men, disappeared into the house.

Sullen, immovable, the foreman sat beside the packing case that served as a table. While the men took their places around him, he kept on eating with his eyes fixed on the ground. But when Menne came along and slid into his usual place, and with great show proceeded to unpack his lunch, diving into his pocket for the knife with which he cut up his bread, the seething foreman gave him a terrific box on the ear—a blow that sent the boy staggering against the shed where Dietz stood polishing boots. Menne landed in a daze, and blinked at the livid, quivering features of the foreman. His own face was distorted, he was ready to cry, and he presented a picture of utter helplessness.

"You damned skunk of a brat," the foreman muttered.

And strange to say, not one of the men took the boy's part. The episode with the old General had upset them all. They did not want to talk about it. Better to forget the horrible picture. The old man's hair was so thin and white! They saw it when his cap fell to the ground.

The boy slunk out of the foreman's sight, bawling. And Dietz discovered that he liked the foreman.

Dietz stood under the shed polishing his chief's boots. The bookkeeper had gingerly brought them to him with his own hands and spitefully set them before him, while Dietz piled some barrels on a hand-cart which he had to take to the freight yards.

"My! How talented you are!" said Herr Schmidt.

Dietz acted as though he had heard nothing, juggled the last barrel, and serenely set about the business of polishing boots. He paid no heed to the men silently eating their lunch and watching him—this time without hostile comment. Nor did it disturb him when Herr Kogel and his visitors came down the stairs talking loudly. Herr Kogel led the Swede, a big blond man, to the huddled motor cars. Two auto trucks in the crazy collection were already resurrected; they shone with new paint, and modestly bore the Kogel name plate. Two men in the party, Kogel's runners, praised the firm volubly. The Swede stopped to inspect a car. His face betrayed nothing. He wanted to look at the other side of the machine, but it stood too close to the wall. Herr Kogel, seeing this, was glad of an excuse to rail at Dietz. His rancor had mounted considerably since morning. The bookkeeper had seen to that; Frau Kogel had come to the defense; and the cognac that Kogel had drunk had helped further to whip up his anger.

"Here, porter!" he cried, not knowing why the sight of Dietz unconcernedly blacking boots should so enrage him.

Dietz placed the boots on the packing case.

"Herr Kogel?"

"Push that truck away—and the next time, keep your hands off—understand? I don't want you nosing around here. My goods are all honest. I have no use for a snooper!"

Dietz had already walked across the yard and had greeted the strangers. But when he heard Herr Kogel's remarks, he stood rigid and white, nailed to the spot.

"May I ask what you mean?" he cut in coldly.

The Swede looked at Dietz in astonishment. For a porter,

he had a most unusual bearing. The runners unconsciously came a few steps nearer. The workmen stopped chewing and pricked up their ears. Kogel felt that he could now show that he was the boss. Anyhow, he could thank this nobody here and his no-account side-partner for all the humiliations that his wife had heaped upon him.

"What's that!" he yelled. "You want to hold *me* to account!" He appealed to the Swede.

"Our servants nowadays are our former officers. A fine lot! When they found themselves out of grub, they came to us decent folks. 'Have you a job for an officer in the navy?' Why not? You'd think they'd do for servants. But you can see for yourself they're not even good for that! The Kaiser, and the Fatherland—that's all they know! And then they are surprised when they get a good kick in the pants!"

For a moment there was a deathly silence. The Swede looked away, and so did not see the frightful change that came over Dietz. But he heard a blow and a throaty scream. Dietz had landed his fist right in Kogel's face. Kogel staggered back. The blood spurted from his nose. Slowly Dietz walked to the shed where his coat hung. He put it on, drew his cap down over his eyes, and went slowly, very slowly, out of the yard.

The workmen gaped after him. The runners exchanged angry whispers: "The deal's off." The Swede snatched his hat and hurried out.

Perhaps his first impulse was to speak to Dietz. But since his chauffeur was already cranking the car, he was reminded of his own affairs, and concluded that he had better let these Germans settle their own hash.

Dietz walked along the street with lagging step. He ex-

pected some one to overtake him. Every now and then he stopped walking and waited. Kogel would have him arrested. But no one came.

Kogel lay groaning in his private office. The bookkeeper made cold compresses for his chief's swollen nose, and cheered him with the news that Frau Kogel had not yet returned. From the day she began to make excursions in the company of Herr von Stauffen, she needed double the time.

"It's a dirty shame!" whined Kogel, "it's a dirty shame!"

And he was right. For at that very moment, his wife was sitting down in Kampinski's, ordering a cooler of champagne to be placed at her side, selecting a regal menu, and waiting for Fred. She was bedecked in her most seductive trappings: an enormous hat, with two yellow birds of paradise, a pink crêpe de Chine blouse cut low enough to disclose her puffy neck, and pink silk stockings. These stockings vexed her; the short skirts that were in style could not very well hide her thick bow legs. She smelled like a perfumery shop and her fat fingers were covered with rings.

Her disdainful look attracted the attention of diners nearby, and it was evident that she became increasingly nervous. For the twentieth time she figured out how long it ought to take Fred to come from the Stettiner Station. A carload of turnips from across the border—which, strictly speaking, happened to be smuggled sugar—was due to-day. It was hard to say at which station the shipment would come in.

She waited and waited. The longer she waited, the more uneasy she became—and the more impatient. Her anxiety and her fears were proof enough that she was in love. Not for a moment did she think of the riskiness of the sugar

transaction, in spite of the fact that the curiosity of only a single official was sufficient, and it would be spotted under the turnips.

She was not thinking about the fine she might have to pay; she was thinking of Fred—that golden boy, who had awakened in her a strange rapture within a few short weeks. She had also had, in the course of these few short weeks, moments in which she thought herself poor, pitifully poor, when the impressive figures of her profit sheet became so many malicious imps that mocked her, moments in which she stood appraising her new parlor furniture in a sweat of misgiving. Each day, Fred's company had opened her eyes to something. A single word from him was enough to make her feel the barrier between them—to bring about scenes between her and her husband. Only yesterday, they had squabbled about the tall mirror. She had bought this mirror cheap. The dealer had said that it came from a well-known castle. A yellow price-label was pasted on its back. Her husband came into the room just as she was scraping it off.

"What do you call that?" he shouted standing there in his shirt-sleeves, a belt encircling his prodigious belly. Nothing about him belied his onetime profession of butcher. Frau Kogel kept on scraping. She grew scarlet with disgust at the man before her. "You can just bet that in *my* house prices will be scratched off," she shot back at him, "Herr von Stauffen said that's what the better people do, and he ought to know!"

In the scuffle that followed, the mirror was nearly shattered.

She sat late into the night, putting down figure after figure with a sweaty pencil, trying to add up how much ali-

mony her husband would have to pay in case she divorced him, and arguing with herself whether she should not start a rival business with Fred.

What possibilities in his very name! What a sensation she would make if she began life anew as Frau von Stauffen!——

And now—here she was. Waiting in a restaurant, fighting back her tears as she watched the door. For Fred's sake, she had her hair dyed red; for his sake, she wore the patent-leather pumps that pinched her feet. She wanted so much to please him! A compliment, a mocking bit of flattery from him made her giddy with joy; a "thank you" set her trembling. She used to come to the office at twelve. Now she came at eight. And the admiration she lavished upon him! She measured every man's looks with his: the book-keeper, her husband, the strangers she saw in the street—and they inevitably came off very badly. She dreamed about Fred every night; and she still kept, in her stylish handbag, the bunch of violets, now dried up, that he had bought her one day—at her own request, it is true.

She had pictured the whole thing. To dine with him in public! And luck was with her. Just to-day, he had very little to do at the office, and her husband was so glad to be rid of him after that row. She had telephoned him at Abendrot & Co., and asked him to wait for her; then she had sent him to the railroad station and invited him to dine.

And he had not come.

What more did he want? Shouldn't he thank his stars that she had noticed him? He didn't know when he was well off! Oh, how well off—the best things to eat! She could tell by the way he ate caviar sandwiches and drank the "schnapps" that he was meant for such things. She had

in her pocket a heavy silver cigarette case she had planned to hand him after their first glass of champagne. He'd soon find out the difference between a hundred marks a week and the income from a regular export business——

At the next table sat two lovers. The man whispered to the girl. She drank in his words with half closed eyes while he played with her hand. As Frau Kogel watched them, her eyes became blurred with tears of envy and self pity. The waiter persisted in asking her if he might serve. She hated the fellow. Was he making fun of her? At last, the practical side of her nature asserted itself. She would have to pay the check in full, even though she ate nothing. And what about the expensive champagne? As she actually formulated these questions, her sanity won out. She ordered the waiter to serve right away.

"Telephone Kogel & Co. My husband should be here now."

She bravely attacked her consommé and marrow-balls, and bravely drank the expensive champagne. When the bottle was half empty, she felt decidedly better and her tender longings turned to darkest rancor. By the time the beefsteak was eaten, and the bottle quite empty, she had conquered her weakness, and again identified herself with Kogel & Co. She planned her revenge. She saw herself with her jeweled fingers pointing to the door "Out with you!" An end to caviar sandwiches and Bardinet! What did he think anyway? Did he think he could make a fool of her because she was soft-hearted?

"Just you wait, my boy!"

Kogel & Co. celebrated their truce in great style, and had to go home by taxi. Solemnly they promised each

other: "When the pair of them show up to-morrow—we'll show them what's what!"

Fred, in the meantime, walked the streets in rebellion. At the Stettiner station, he had made his inquiries for the lost carload of turnips. In reply, an official asked in a low voice if he knew the "ropes," another made some insinuations about Kogel & Co., while a third advised him to notify the railroad police. Fred discreetly withdrew, holding his head ridiculously high. It was then that the happenings of the day flashed before his mind's eye. He again heard Kogel's throaty voice belching abuse. Words like "snooper," "spy," "stool pigeon" he could endure easily enough, but the tirade he first overheard—the marital squabble that had broken out over Frau Kogel's new red hair—would ring in his ears for many a day. Right there he had made up his mind to get his discharge, as soon as his errand was done.

Then came Frau Kogel's telephone message at Abendrot & Co. The knowing smirk on the face of the girl who gave him the message, the dozen brazen eyes suddenly fastening on him. The proprietor himself, fawning and bowing before him—a prospect for future sales. Although not a word had been spoken during all that filthy innuendo and those leering, dirty looks, he felt befouled. They thought—he could read what they thought on their faces. He stayed five minutes longer—not to wait for Frau Kogel, but to defy those insinuations.

On the steps, he met the woman. She had come in an automobile. Her face shone with sweat, and the yellow birds-of-paradise on her hat swayed in agitation. Her hands were hot, and those hot hands were holding his, while she rattled on about Kampinski's and the drive after their

errand at the freight yards. He almost choked with rage. Ride with her in an automobile! With those birds-of-paradise!— With all her outlandishness!— In full view at Kampinski's!— He shuddered——

"Tricot—tricot—tricot—trikkotaille hat sie an," impishly sang a boy, who loitered on the sidewalk leering at Fred and winking significantly. Fred drew himself up, thanked Frau Kogel for her kindness, said he would rather go to the freight yards alone, as that was a man's job, hastily promised everything she wanted, and opened the door of the automobile for her. When the car started, she coquettishly waved her hand to him. He felt as if his face had been slapped. He was suddenly reminded of an attack of nausea he had once had on a submarine, when it refused to rise from the bottom of the sea—when the terror-stricken machinist had tried to shout his warning, and the words had stuck in his throat. But this woman made him feel even worse!

When he was a little boy, and a difficult decision confronted him, he used to ask his father how this ancestor or that would have acted under the circumstances; his father's answer would then determine his conduct. Now, too, he put the question to his ancestors, and the tantalizing lilt of the street song mocked him, dimming its refrain into his ears: *"Tricot—tricot—tricot—trikkotaille hat sie an."*

He threw away his cigarette and entered a café. An hour later, he wrote a special delivery letter—not by advice of his ancestors. For at that moment, the perfume on the lace handkerchief in his pocket was more persuasive than his ancestors and their unbending code. Fred wrote to Frau Lia Waldow:

"This afternoon I am free. May I thank you in person for the undeserved kindness you have shown me of late?

"Fred von Stauffen."

When Frau Lia read this she was beside herself with joy. She quickly dismissed the dressmaker, let her maid off until morning—she herself was planning to visit some friends overnight—carefully chose the right dress, thankful that her husband was absent on a trip, and hastily wrote the latter a card, which she gave the maid to post:

"Hubby dearest, I miss you terribly. You've been gone too long. I don't know what to do without you. Do you remember to put on your heavy underwear on damp days? The weather's glorious here, and I sit on the balcony all day long. Write when you are coming; I want to bake you a nice big cake. A thousand kisses.

"Your Lia."

Smiling to herself, she collected a quantity of beautiful old crystal, china, and silver plate that Fräulein von Gleichen at various times had given her in exchange for sausage and lard—always with the plea that if Frau Waldow would only accept this, her father would feel less obligated. These trophies Lia now locked in the big closet, where she kept the damask table cloths for which she had paid the spinster five hundred marks. Whenever Lia handled these satiny linens, she marvelled at Maria's credulity—at her lack of wordliness. Something else she could not understand was how Fräulein Maria could cry

so much over the war. As for herself, the war had been nothing short of a blessing. It was the war that had developed her healthy acquisitive instincts into a genuine talent. It had provided her with the opportunity to win a place in society. From a little dressmaker's helper she had become a Frau Lieutenant. A war bride, of course. Her husband's mama, a high official's widow, turned pale to this day whenever she saw her daughter-in-law. And yet Frau Mama should have been thankful to Lia. Her son before his marriage had been only a minor bookkeeper in the office of a rich uncle, who had never entertained any illusions about his nephew's ability, and who liked to taunt the young fellow with his mother's silly hopes.

The uncle had reason enough. Ordinarily, a boy of fifteen was through with the required courses which counted as the equivalent of two out of three years of compulsory military service, whereas his nephew at the late age of seventeen had not yet completed them. On the other hand, the boy had already made surprising headway with lady friends of doubtful shade. After a few wild years, the uncle, fearing for the old family name, had taken the boy into his office, had given him a small position, and was not unhappy when the war had relieved him of the young rake.

Even the boy's marriage had left him cold. So many lads were dying on the field, why should *his* nephew come back? Why should the youngster's wife concern him?

But now? Frau Lia's lips curled. Now, whenever she came, the old man stood impatiently waiting for her at the window; and her husband—now that the rich old man's son had been killed in the war—had the prospect, as soon as the next opening offered itself, of becoming the firm's chief representative. "How did you work it?" he had asked

her when she brought him the news. But she only laughed and kissed him.

Yes, she had every reason to be grateful for the war. And so she was. Was it not the war which had enabled her to steer her easy-going husband into the right channels? What was the use of going to the front when you could just as well stay at a safe distance? What was the harm in looking out for your own interests, when your regiment was ordered to strange places? A soldier's honor might be a fine thing, but so was a care-free life! And to-day he thanked her. Their cupboard and purse were full, and they faced an assured future.

"Will you be true to me, darling?" she used to ask him, back in those days. And he had been overjoyed to have this clever, far-seeing little woman cling to him like that. It had made him feel so masterful.

But one day, she had discovered that he bored her. She had begun to hate him for being a spineless milksop. His slavish devotion disgusted her. And she had grown tired of having him humor her whims. All of a sudden, she told herself that she was far too good for him, that she deserved a better fate. And every man who happened to look at her, every man she happened to meet, had then become her husband's rival. Any man of good appearance put her into a flutter. The weekly visits to the rich old uncle depressed her. She would come back from them with sick headaches, heart attacks, and fainting spells that drove her husband into a panic.

It was on such a day of discontent that she had made her first visit to Fräulein von Gleichen. In that house she breathed the air of a strange world. When she stood before the general, her whole body shook. When he stretched out his withered hands to her, she smiled at him the way

she always smiled at the doting uncle. But the general only scrutinized her sternly, and without a word in answer to her stilted remarks, said something about his daughter's unreasonable fears, and then disappeared into his room. Fräulein von Gleichen assured Lia with ever so much warmth that papa was perfectly charmed with the Gnädige Frau, and that it was only papa's shyness that made him so reticent. But Lia knew better. She came again, and still again, but managed to avoid the general. A glance at the old soldier's household was enough to assure her that she had started a very valuable friendship. She had to laugh whenever she thought of Maria's despair, and the costly old furniture which the latter so pathetically dusted and polished every day, the heirlooms, old bronzes, paintings and curios. "Why don't you sell them?" Frau Lia had once asked, "then you'll have money enough for your father's care." But Maria was horrified. That would be sacrilege! Her father would be furious, if she as much as suggested such a thing! And besides, she had no right to do it. She had three sisters who had equal claim on the things. How could she even think of it?

And yet, Frau Lia somehow had managed it. Out of the goodness of her heart, she had offered a small sum of money to Fräulein von Gleichen; and when she saw the timid fräulein was afraid to accept it, she laughingly had proposed a happy compromise: "Why, all you have to do is to just give me some of your things in pledge—then your mind will be at rest, and your conscience will be easier. Of course it is understood that you will get your things back when you want them."

Fräulein von Gleichen had turned this over in her mind for one long night. Should she tell her father? She decided

to keep it from him. It was bad for him to get excited. How happy she had been when she was able once more to set before him the dishes he had so long needed; she told him, in answer to his insistent questions, that the prices at the market had suddenly dropped. The little maid servant, when secretly questioned, confirmed this, and dutifully helped to carry the treasures into Frau Lia's apartment.

"Where did you get those fine things, wifey?" Frau Lia's husband had asked. His wife laid her fingers on her lips and laughed. Some of the things she had put into her safe. For she now had a safe.

She had begun to take a new interest in Fräulein von Gleichen, now that their friendship was based on something substantial. And it was not surprising that she should also desire to broaden her circle and take in the rest of the family. It had all come to her in a flash. She might just as well have the whole family look to her as their benefactor. Hence, she had wheedled the old uncle into getting Colonel von Stauffen a place in the bank.

"For a handsome young chap?" the old man had playfully asked. She had rolled her eyes toward the ceiling and folded her hands.

"O, my God, no! For a diabetic old codger with a wooden leg!" And the expression on her face was so hoydenish that the old man had burst out laughing.

And that was how Colonel von Stauffen had come into his new position.

Lia knew as much about Fred as did his aunt. In fact she knew more. For when Maria went to bed, her poor brain became the playground for cabbages and rabbit meat, mushroom dumplings and scrambled eggs, pork chops and

mutton stew. Frau Lia, on the other hand, receiving word regularly from her husband that, thank God, he was doing well in the Commissary, busied herself with thoughts of Fred. The photographs that she had seen of him came to life; the short accounts she had heard of his life on a submarine became the glamorous deeds of a hero. And she was annoyed when she heard with what modesty he had told his grandfather about his promotions and decorations! Right from the start, she knew he was just the type she could fall in love with. With hot cheeks she would lie awake far into the night, picturing her first meeting with him after the war, planning his first visit to her. She already felt his first kiss.

Small wonder, then, after she had really met him, that she was in a fever of joy. He was just what she had pictured him. His forbidding reserve, his curt rebuffs ravished her completely. True, she could have shrieked with rage when she stood before him for the first time, feeling so trivial, so insignificant. But afterwards, when she had relived his every word, his every glance, those few moments with him in the elevator, she knew she had a certain power over him. Then she became delirious with joy. Only one thought possessed her—how could she get him to come to her? An invitation would be too blunt. An "accidental" meeting too obvious. So she had hit upon the tart. And at last—at last—he was coming!

She wanted to receive him like a prince. She wanted to flatter him, to cater to him. She had five days left before her husband's return. These she must employ to good advantage. Leave it to her! She knew how! Hadn't Fräulein von Gleichen told her how poor Fred had to deny himself? And how he had always yearned for beauty? In her,

he was to find everything he had ever wanted. In her, he was to find the woman—the giver of all that he had ever longed for. With full hands! Like a good fairy!

She laid the table with her prettiest things. She herself prepared the dainty sandwiches, bought wine and flowers. It was to be a feast—a feast for him!

And now for her dress! A soft, clingy gray silk, an enormous velvet rose of deep red at the girdle. Her arms bare, her body more revealed than hidden through the cleverly arranged drapery. Sheer gray stockings and gray suede pumps. She dusted herself in a cloud of powder and perfumed her hair. Then she sat down before the long mirror to study, in turn, her laughter, her smile, the pouting of her lips.

Never in her life had she been so happy. It was all so entrancingly secret, so deliciously naughty. Just as she had always dreamed it. She loved her husband's utter faith in her and her bewitching rôle of a respectable married woman. She looked forward to Fred's amazement at finding the general's household goods in her house. It was all like a story in a book. She was giddy with rapture. She made a deep curtsey to herself in the glass.

The bell rang. She let Fred wait two full minutes before she opened the door for him. She wanted to taste even his impatience and his suspense. In these two minutes her body was shaken by chills, and her lips became blue.

She opened the door. She saw in his face a look of mingled surprise and joy. And in spite of her well rehearsed poised before the glass, she trembled as he bent over her hand. She said not a word of thanks for the roses he gave her. She could only smile.

"Expecting company?" he asked, when he saw the table.

"No," said Frau Lia. But now, she did not smile.
He looked at her.
"Lia—My God—Lia——"
With a sob she flung herself on his breast.

V

The little servant girl brought the news to the neighbors. She had heard Fräulein von Gleichen's scream, followed by a dull thud. She had quickly tip-toed to the scene. She had been strictly forbidden ever to enter the General's room; but nobody had said anything about peeping through the keyhole. So it happened that she saw her master lying across the desk, his head close to the large inkwell, and her mistress kneeling on the floor, her bony hands clutching the arm of the chair, as she sobbed aloud, wailing in misery: "Father! Father!" The frightened girl noiselessly opened the door, and with outstretched neck slunk nearer—saw the revolver—the lifeless hand. She shrieked.

Maria, too overcome to check her sobs, turned her head. Her face was distorted with agony and despair. She wanted to speak, but her tongue would not obey. She wanted to pick herself up, but collapsed on the floor.

"His Excellency shot himself," screamed the girl, setting up a mournful howl. She burst into the kitchen, rushed down the back stairs to her friend on the second floor, pounded her fists on the door in an insane fear that something gruesome was stalking behind her. Hurling herself into her friend's arms she shrieked: "His Excellency shot himself——"

Frau Hansen, her friend's mistress, heard it in the storeroom. She was just then engaged in sifting the maggots out of the farina. She carefully shook the worms into a basket containing a variety of spoiled foodstuffs which her husband would have to dump somewhere secretly, that

night. The storeroom was Frau Hansen's treasure house. Even her children did not know its secrets. Standing like a queen, the large blonde woman listened to the girl's outcry. She slipped out of the storeroom, once the family guest-room, locked the door, securely, and hastened to her husband.

"General von Gleichen has shot himself!"

He slowly raised his head from his work, his hands straightening the litter of papers on his desk. "It was to be expected! A fanatic like that!"

She looked at him questioningly.

"Don't you think you ought to pay a condolence visit right away? Our former friendship——"

He leaned back and pondered. Frau Hansen studied her husband and told herself, smilingly, that he really did resemble Count Rantzau-Brackdorf, as a flattering friend had remarked the other day, except that her husband looked far more distinguished.

"No. That would be unwise," replied Herr Hansen. "Not with the turn politics have taken. I can't afford to mix with people of the old régime. Even before he shot himself, General von Gleichen was already a dead man. As Darwin says, if we want to survive, we must adjust ourselves to our environment. That's why I came out for Ebert the minute he led us out of chaos into order."

"But even so"—she sat down beside the desk, "even so, it would make a good impression. Don't forget the general did a lot for you. When you wanted Frau Ludendorf to preside, he got you the introduction, and thanks to him, Princess Beatrice took a hand——"

His composure fled. The fine lines across his forehead became deep furrows. His fingertips impatiently drummed the arms of his chair.

"It's not very tactful of you, my dear, to bring that up just now. You see I am trying to forget all that. No one has suffered greater disillusionment in Ludendorf than I. I thank God to this day that my hands are washed clean of him. And don't you think the Princess would have hurt our cause, had the people known of her private goings on? It would be out of the question for such a person to sponsor our heroes' graves to-day."

"Surely; and she was wise to resign. But what has that to do with the General?"

"Don't let your heart run away with you," he interrupted. "We both know what the military used to be; our whole life was bound up in them. We set them up on a pedestal—" He arose and shut the door. The crying and wailing disturbed the quiet of the room. "But to day? We sin against the nation unless we thoroughly shake ourselves loose from them. You see I am now a personage—in the thick of things. Not only was it necessary for me to change my convictions, but it must be known that I changed them. After a hard struggle with myself, I came to see the wisdom of the new order. And didn't I openly and uprightly go to those in power saying: 'Here I am. Such are my convictions. Do you need me?' I saved no end of prestige for the Government. The graves of our heroes will now be the pride of the Republic! Under these circumstances, the death of an old man, even if he is an Excellency, cannot very well touch us."

There was a timid knock on the door. A weeping voice faltered,—"If Gnädige Frau would be so kind—the General's Lise is here——"

"Tell her to wait," said Frau Hansen in her queenly tone. She turned to her husband, who, deep in thought,

was pacing up and down the room. She smiled faintly.

"But why not put the General's name to work? I'm sure we couldn't have a better drawing card. Broadcast the fact that the deserving general, etc., is the first to open the rows of heroes' graves. Mention the names of your new patrons and add that you will continue to accept contributions as you have in the past." And when he looked at her in admiration, she added, "In business, one must snatch at every lucky chance." And still smiling, she walked out.

She listened with a show of deep emotion to the news the weeping Lise stammered out and placed her white hand on the girl's blonde head, but her quick eye noticed that her own servant had spread butter instead of marmalade on her bread. "We will immediately go to their assistance," she said, without taking her eye off the butter. "Calm yourself, and tell Fräulein von Gleichen that we stand by her loyally."

Trembling, the girl delivered the message. Fräulein von Gleichen turned on her.

"How in the world could you!—" she sobbed and cowered like a sinner beside the dead man. "Didn't his Excellency forbid us to have anything to do with those people? His eyes are hardly closed, when you forget everything. Good God! What shall I do? How can I tell my sister? The shock will kill her! Run quickly to my nephew! Herr Lieutenant should come instantly! But don't tell him what has happened. He will be too frightened. Tell him that his Excellency is very sick, and that he must come right away."

Lise flew down the stairs, quickly confided the news to the janitor, ran headlong down the street as if she were being pursued, hastened up three steps of the lodging house, rang, knocked, stood panting before the sergeant's

widow, and stammered her inquiry for Herr von Stauffen.

"He left an hour ago," said the woman. "But Herr Reuter is home." She let the girl in.

Dietz had just answered Pit's stormy welcome, and had watched the little fellow greedily make away with the food which had been left untouched since morning. Fred had left a short message—"I have an engagement—may return late." Dietz had washed and changed his clothes, and, dressed in a middy shirt, had sat down to frame his resignation to Kogel & Co., soberly and in a business-like way. His long walk had given him back his usual calm. He sat at the table, groping for the words to give his resignation the right sound. Pit snuggled up to him.

Suddenly the dog growled and started up. There was a shy knock on the door.

"Come in," called Dietz.

The frightened girl stood before him, her apron held to her red eyes, and haltingly gave her message, embarrassed at finding some one else in place of her lieutenant. She was just fifteen, and in her first position.

Dietz listened to the trembling voice, alarmed by the swollen eyes.

"As yet nothing has happened?" His heart hammered in dread.

The girl's teeth knocked together. She did not mean to let it slip out, but in two minutes he knew. "Our Excellency shot himself."

He stared at the girl. In that moment everything he had ever lived through became trivial and meaningless. An old soldier dead by his own hand! Dead because his hopes lay buried! And Fred—where was Fred?

He ran out. The landlady must know.

No, she knew nothing. Except that he had looked very elegant. He had been carrying yellow gloves, and he smelled good. And in his coat lapel she had seen the iron cross.

Dietz read Fred's note once more—and yet once more. An engagement? Yellow gloves? A thought flashed into his mind, he struck his fists against his forehead—Frau Kogel! —Impossible!——

He was at a loss.

"Tell Fräulein von Gleichen I will send him as soon as he comes," he said huskily. "No—tell her that I myself—in ten minutes——"

The sniffling Lise bolted away. Dietz brushed his best suit, dressed with care, as if for inspection before a great war lord, pinned on his decorations, and set out to pay his last respects to the dead General, and to make excuses for Fred.

But kindly neighbors had already come to help the grief-stricken daughter. Frau Hansen, dressed in deep black, held the weeping woman in her arms. Herr Hansen in a frock coat and high hat talked impressively about the general's glorious example, seeing to it at the same time that the door remained locked, until the police received the death certificate. He volunteered to take the news to Colonel von Stauffen.

"Where is Fred," Maria wailed, when she saw Dietz. "He must go to my sister——"

She did not know how to escape the Hansens. What did these people want here anyway? Since the day of the revolution she had not seen them. Before that they used to see each other daily.

"We men of honor must show the people a good example—

we must show them what it means to be German!" Herr Hansen had frequently said, with great emphasis. "One God, one Uniform, one Fatherland. To remain loyal to our ideals—that's the privilege of our class."

And he had encouraged her father in his determination to live within the wretched food regulations.

"I don't want to be better off than the poor boys at the front," the General used to say. "If I cannot fight beside them, I can at least suffer with them!"

Frau Hansen had had genuine tears in her eyes as she listened to this. She had chimed in to say that these were her husband's words precisely. But one day, Frau Hansen's servant took Lise to see the Hansen storeroom—the key had been left sticking in the door—and Lise breathlessly told her mistress of sacks of flour and cases of chocolate; of hams and smoked meats and crocks full of fat. Some of it was bad, but never, the Hansen's girl had told her, had she been given as much as a slice of sausage! Maria had kept this from her father. These people had made her feel ashamed. When Herr Hansen had talked about "our heroes" and advocated harsh measures against those who refused to suffer hunger for the sake of the Fatherland, she had fallen into a frenzy. And the speeches he had made urging big rewards for the patriots who reported food hoarders!

"If we had more men like you," the General would say on such occasions, "we couldn't lose."

But then, along came the Ninth of November, and Herr Hansen had worn a red band on his sleeve and a red badge in his buttonhole.

And now—what did these people want here?

"I am glad to put myself at your service," Dietz said to Maria.

"She led him to the dead man. She had to get away from the Hansens—She moaned again and again. "But why did he do it? Why—?" She bitterly reproached herself because she had left the house.—It positively could not have happened had she been at home. She asked anxiously after Fred. Who should take the heart-breaking news to her sister? "Surely, I can't let strange people—" She was relieved when Dietz offered to go.

He found the Colonel alone. It affected him deeply to see how quietly Herr von Stauffen took the news.

"I have long ago steeled myself for this," said the Colonel. "He will not be the last one—," and for a long time he stood before the general's portrait, which pictured him in the bloom of manhood. Dietz saw how the old man's shoulders heaved, how he remained standing, nevertheless —erect——.

But when at last he turned around, he looked old and haggard. The muscles of his face quivered.

He said hoarsely: "I thank you. Where is Fred?"

Dietz explained: a business errand; one isn't master of one's own time; it was to be hoped that to-day Fred would not be detained too long.

"What hardships you boys have to go through!" sighed the Colonel. "You stood up fighting the enemy—and it was a hard fight! And to-day you have to fight your own people. A still harder fight. And we old fellows cannot help you. That's the worst of it. My older son fell in the attack on Antwerp. A death to be envied."

The Colonel dragged himself to the window. His wooden leg was heavier to-day. And how gray he had become! To think that Fred was not with him now. That in this

hour his boy should not be with him. And Dietz felt that he would give up a good part of his life, to hold his own father's hand once more, to look once more into his kindly eyes.

His voice, too, was hoarse as he asked, "Has Herr Oberst any further command?" He stood erect, completely the soldier—a rôle he found easier than that of a human being. But the Colonel read the emotion in his dark eyes and offered his hand.

"I thank you. Whatever comes, we must meet it alone. I must go to my wife." And as he reached the door: "Send Fred without delay."

"Perhaps he is already back," thought Dietz, persuading himself that Fred was waiting anxiously for him. But when he reached his room, he found only Pit, who yelped with joy as he bounced against his master, again and again, like a live ball. Later they lay side by side on the old sofa and waited.

Hour after hour went by and Fred did not come. At midnight Dietz fell asleep. At three o'clock, he sat up with a start. "Fred, are you there?" But Fred was not there. At six o'clock, when Dietz awoke, Fred lay on his bed in a deep sleep.

Dietz did not wake him. He was afraid to face him. If he should tell him now, Fred would feel guilty—he would be ashamed—and he would never forget this moment.

On the table lay the sheet of paper intended for the letter to Kogel. Dietz wrote instead that General von Gleichen was confined at home after a serious accident; that he himself had informed the Colonel, and had explained Fred's absence on the grounds of a business engagement.

He silently dressed, beckoned Pit, and together they went out.

It was easy to obtain the story from the newspapers. A few claimed that the military men were again holding their heads high, that they had assumed an air of defiance that was straining the patience and forebearance of the populace, and that it was to be readily understood how the marchers, thrust into their present misery by none other than these very military gentlemen, should fittingly symbolize their bitterness by the breaking of the sword. That the general should have let his pride sweep away his prudence was something to be deplored. Everybody regretted the tragic outcome, as the old gentleman had always had his merits.

Due to these merits, tactfully worded notices also appeared in the papers, offering the old general a hero's grave—a grave that was to be paid for out of a fund raised by popular subscription, and now sponsored by the illustrious German Republic—and headed worthily by the well-known Nikolaus Hansen.

This remarkable Herr Hansen was one of those faithful citizens who had confidently thrown themselves into the war, knowing that such confidence was not misplaced. Not that he had ever offered his poor unworthy body to the Fatherland. For this there was no need. Bodies there were a-plenty. But brains—where were the brains? Nobody knew whence this man had suddenly sprung, what he used to be, how he had previously made his living; he had merely bobbed up at the magical moment like a story-book genie. He was tall and broad; but strangely enough, he carried in his pocket a certificate of exemption from his doctor at home. He possessed a quick sense of the

needs of the moment. Under his banner, he mobilized home workers and refugees, the wounded and the destitute, and, with his impressive lists, applied to officials, to industrial advisors, to hysterical ladies, to public busybodies, and to thousands of others, who, like himself, had sacrificed their brains rather than their bodies. Though Hansen's charges had received little enough from all these appeals, visits, and public collections, he himself, at least, had been well repaid.

His thread-bare coat had now been replaced; his wife began to dress better, and his children could eat their fill. Contributions from all sides poured in for his philanthropic undertaking. True, for a large number, the sums collected would have been small indeed, but for a small circle the money had well sufficed. All likely notables Herr Hansen had visited himself. On these occasions, he never failed to refer to other well-known subscribers. In exchange for cash donations, he was authorized to promise badges and official public acknowledgments, and even contracts for army deliveries. Suddenly, he found himself on the executive committees of various war organizations, and enjoyed the privilege of making street-collections for himself, that is, for his undertakings. He always voiced the sentiments of the field marshals, only more vociferously, much more vociferously. He organized dances, teas, and workrooms under the most fashionable patronage, where people could amuse themselves for the benefit of the wounded and the war widows, and where Herr Hansen, serving in an honorary capacity, would cordially thank his patrons for these charming hours. Every commander—or rather his wife—danced at Herr Hansen's puppet-show, and every one felt flattered to be there. Ladies of the highest social rank

cheerfully lent their names to the enterprise—being gratified to note that the executive board contained not one civilian name other than that of the genial founder.

Yes, indeed—the war had looked out for its man. He had only to see to it that the public's impulse to give received renewed incentives. That had not always been so easy. For all of a sudden, the number of refugees had diminished. So long as begging was being done in their behalf, the idea had somehow struck them that they might as well do it themselves. And one day the home-workers balked. A rival undertaking, without any pretense of charity, had offered surprisingly high wages. On the day Herr Hansen made his famous speech about carrying on, he had been on the verge of giving up. Shortly after that came his real triumph—his appeal to the women of the land. Give to our fallen sons! Honor their graves! An appeal to all!

It became a splendid business enterprise. This time even Frau Ludendorf had danced, having no suspicion that she was contributing 33 1-3 per cent to the brilliant organizer himself. At the head of the business-men's list, the manufacturer of a corn-cure had subscribed 50,000 marks; others had followed his example, and Herr Hansen, deeply moved, had thanked them. His eight room apartment was now secured; and had the war lasted a little longer, a trip to the United States would eventually have proven highly feasible. He discharged the few remaining home-workers and the one lone refugee with a lecture in which he strongly emphasized man's duty to be grateful! And when the poor wretch wanted to know why Herr Hansen had nothing better for him than the refuge of a cellar, he was thrown out.

Sad to say, the trip to America never came off. It seemed, the German Red Cross objected to Herr Hansen's rivalry

(so he said); and besides, his people at headquarters had become uneasy. When the leaders finally lost their heads, Herr Hansen had locked up his children's savings-books, had made a large payment on an estate he had long had his eye on, had taken out a modest insurance for his wife, and proceeded to confine himself to the business of Heroes' Graves. Public interest in Heroes' Graves was still alive. Heroes' Graves were not only a worthy link to the party in power, but also a thoroughly neutral link. For was not every battle-slain son of the people a hero? Was there any need for illustrious names?

Colonel von Stauffen was greatly astonished, on the day after the calamity, to behold this pompous figure standing before him in deep mourning. Herr Hansen now needed a Hero's Corpse for his merciful undertaking. His high hat with its wide crêpe, his sleeve-band of mourning, and the black-rimmed monocle he wore led the colonel to believe that he represented a firm of undertakers. But when the colonel heard about the Heroes' Graves, he flatly refused.

"The General's regiment will make all arrangements. Any other honor would have no meaning for us."

Hansen argued. "The effect on the people would be more inspiring. We have to give them back their lost ideals. That is our mission——"

"Whose mission?"

"Every one's, every one who in his heart still carries, like a sacred legacy, the glory of the Fatherland," smoothly replied Herr Hansen.

The colonel looked long at his elegant visitor; and then brought his eyes back to his wooden leg.

"But why," asked he, without lifting his eyes. "Why

do you concern yourself with the dead? Every man who fell for his country *has* his Hero's Grave. His Excellency," he emphasized the words, "would have been mortified, had he thought that some day his body would be made the center of a theatrical show. Why don't you busy yourself with the corpse of a poor devil from the free hospital? The so-called people would trump up more sympathy for one of their own than for a General. But if you insist on finding an outlet for your capital, why don't you let the living share it? Do you suppose that the people who parade to-day under the red flag have lost their ideals? They have what they want. The people whose ideals are lost you will find elsewhere. There are hundreds of thousands of them, whom the nation has scrapped because they did what they were expected to do. Help *them*, and you will set up rolls of honor for which the nation will some day thank you!"

This ended the interview. Herr Hansen thanked the colonel for his eloquent exhortation, and begged to be excused. The colonel passed his trembling hand over his eyes. Why should the least excitement shake him so? He had to summon all his strength to hide his agitation from his wife. He felt that the time had come when he must apply for his pension. He sat down at his desk and wrote to the pension-bureau asking when he might expect his back pay. He studied his bank statement, compared the value of his government bonds with the current exchange, and glanced with dread at a pile of letters with offers from undertakers for a first-class burial, with choir and church bells, and in the offers from dealers for the confidential purchase of the effects of the deceased. Suddenly he realized that a torturing question had for months been gnawing at his

heart: what would happen, if he should suddenly die? How would his wife get along? Fred would somehow struggle through. But his wife? His wife? If his bonds should fall still lower—! His fortune had shrunk to nothing!

It was a simple funeral, without church bells and without the regimental band. Relatives and friends reconciled themselves to the last farewell—as did Frau Lia. She had sent a large wreath of lilies-of-the-valley, and had amazed the family at the cemetery by her elaborate costume and her loud lamentations. Dietz stood not far from her. For a moment he could have sworn that the scent which the wind carried from her direction was the same as the perfume on Fred's coat.

He was ashamed of this new-born suspicion.

VI

It began to look as if Kogel & Co. attached no importance to the return of their porter and their second bookkeeper. Their letters of resignation remained unanswered, and the wages due them unpaid. Instead of a reply from Kogel & Co., a registered letter came from Hermann Seke, addressed to Dietz. When he read it, a little of his old zest for life returned. He even laughed—laughed out loud until he shook. And Pit recognized his master of the old days.

"Dear Friend," he read, "I phoned several times to the A.E.G., but they denied knowing anything of your whereabouts, and a letter addressed to you came back. The girl on the phone insisted you must be somewhere else. A letter to Dr. Rathenau was ignored. After many attempts I got your address from the police records. I assume this will reach you.

"I herewith offer your firm our line of stationery at a sacrifice. A commission of 50,000 marks stands at your disposal—of course on a cash transaction. I make this offer because I place the highest valuation on your connections.

"I wish also to add that the whole town is proud of you. The mayor's wife openly said that a directorship in the A.E.G., though for the time being only in the subdirectorate, is a brilliant position. Papa will soon approach you in the name of the town with specifications for a contract, and will

count on your influence for a good concession. You see, I am doing my utmost for you, and remain aware of our old friendship,

Yours,

HERMANN SEKE."

He could well laugh—laugh away the humiliation and the misery, the dread and the bitterness of the last days. He only regretted that Fred, who had excused himself in a short note—"until the settlement of grandfather's estate"—was not with him to share the joke.

"Listen to this, Pit: 50,000 marks cash!" said Dietz. "On the strength of this, we'd better show ourselves to the gaping crowd."

They set out and idled on the Kurfürstendamm in the noonday sun, Dietz with head high, Pit with impudence and a challenging air. The latter looked proudly up at his master, for he had just succeeded in frightening off a large bulldog, with shrill barking and little teeth bared.

While Dietz was obediently letting his eyes follow the runaway dog, he saw some one walk past him, some one whose round face and pointed gray beard, whose easy stride and rippling cloak, flashed upon him like a light in the dark. Strange that it should be a stupid bulldog's part to lead him out of beggary. "If you should ever need me," this man once had said to him, "Come to me and I will do anything in my power for you!"

With pounding heart, Dietz walked on. The picture of those November days, when he had last seen this man, came back to him, days when Berlin was an armed camp —when so many young lives were snuffed out—when one cut oneself off from one's past and let the angry deck

officer fling one one's pay with a growl. "This wipes out all claims." One did not ask, on whose authority. One was too proud to demand an accounting of the State in its piteous collapse. After one had seen the red flag hoisted on one's ship and heard the sullen crew defy its officers; after one had seen mutiny on board, mutiny that had torn down the proud battle-flag, one could never bring oneself to serve under another ensign. Dietz again saw himself on the day before his discharge, mobbed, and dragged against a wall by a gang of revolutionists. They had spotted him. He still wore his marine cap. There was a blinding rain. They had difficulty in taking aim. Or were they out of bullets? They let him go. The next day, when he stuck his pay in his pocket, another gang lay in wait for him. That evening, the procalamation. Save the country from chaos! Volunteer! After that—the days of terror—those devastating street fights. Everywhere barbed wire. Machine guns on housetops. In the streets, gun fire and bursting hand-grenades. And in the midst of it all, Dietz, aged nineteen, driven and torn and raging, seeing his high hopes go down in that chaos. Then he had been in command of the machine guns in front of the Navy Building. That was something to live up to! He had paced up and down behind the guns. The mob had known enough to keep its distance. He had walked like an admiral, with long, measured step, his hands plunged into the pockets of his gray cloak—so comically solemn. His men must have had their laugh at the sight of his earnest, boyish face.

And then, along had come this captain—this same one, with his gray, pointed beard and his round face,—down the steps, cautiously; and Dietz had been puzzled because the gray beard was missing, while his dress gave no hint that he

belonged to the Navy. The man had beckoned hastily. "No scene, my dear Reuter! I see you are in command. In my room—you know where—I left some cigars, and a bottle of port wine. Escort me over the bridge there. Of course you are armed?"

Dietz had led him safely across, but he had not been able to make out why this officer of high rank should, all of a sudden, have become so friendly, nor why he should have, so obviously, gotten himself up in civil dress. He had not been able to understand why such a personage should have begged him never to forget this hour—"If I can ever do you a good turn——"

Can he! Great God! An end to worries! Dietz wanted to run after him: "Help me get a start. I have nothing except my body. Put me anywhere, it's all the same to me. I'll try to be a credit to you—just let me earn enough for me and Pit——"

His heart beat wildly. What luck! The first thing in the morning he would go to him—the first thing——

At ten o'clock the next day, he stood before the Navy Building. It affected him strangely to see the guard, a young boy with a steel helmet. Dietz threw back his head, identified himself, and heard a curt "Pass!"

A man in civilian dress led him to the orderlies' room. Here, a group were at breakfast, talking about turnips and bacon. Dietz stood at attention. He was ignored. After a few minutes, he coughed. The men looked at him in surprise, laughed, and continued to eat.

"There's no such hurry, nowadays!" one of them sang out.

And they kept up their talk about turnips. At last, his

name was sent in. "He must wait" was the answer. He felt his hopes die. This "must-wait" blotted out that remembered camaraderie, that hearty handshake.

Dietz finally stood before the captain. On the man's sleeve, he saw the broad stripe of the admiralty; somehow, he knew that this man would give a good deal to forget his ignominious dress on the ninth of November. He knew that the admiral was affronted by this visit, this merciless reminder of his flight.

"Herr Admiral permitted me some time ago to report——"

"On what occasion——?"

There, at his writing-desk, sat the Admiral, self-assured, unapproachable, entirely the superior. He remembered only hazily. But he made official use of the moment to add——

"You repudiated the proclamation——"

Dietz felt the blood rush to his face.

"Herr Admiral said at the time, that, befitting the honor of an officer at sea——"

The admiral looked at him. It was the cold, searching look so greatly feared on board—the look that always hunted out its victim.

"To protect your interests, you should have awaited the decision of your superiors. Where was your last command?"

"In the hospital!"

"Wounded?"

"Plunge of 3,000 meters in a plane. Severe heart neurosis!"

"You could have drawn a pension of sixty marks a month, which, of course, you've forfeited."

In mute astonishment Dietz fixed his gaze on the speaker. His faith, his unbounded faith in the man's word, was now shattered. That he still remained standing on the spot was

due to his bewilderment. What would the fellow say next? What would he come out with next? He came to his senses. He began to think. Just as now this man sat here, ruddy and well-nourished, conscious of his power, inaccessible, so had he sat there through the years of the war. Far from the firing line. In comfort. Busy with his regulations. Where did he get his iron cross? Did he ever feel the bony fingers of death close in on his throat? Did he ever see the grin of death while the life in him, the young, irrepressible life in him, cried out? Did he ever know the savage pain that shoots into a man's vitals, when, at a crazy height, the dying motor sputters its threat of death—when the maddening will to live does not permit the hand on the wheel to lose its convulsive grip, when the terrible plunge is paid for with that flashing panorama of the whole of life—and the faltering voice finds its one utterance—"Father! Father!" Oh, if only this man here had known once what it meant, after a plunge with death, to look up again—and see the sun—and feel the blood in one's veins run hot—and feel again the throb of life. With only a frail wind-driven plank between that life and the bottom of the sea! What was he saying—this man with the manicured hands and the well-fed look? A thing like that is worth sixty marks a month, that is, if you have observed the regulations? Sixty marks a month! God.

The Admiral felt a pair of eyes boring into him.

"I don't know how to classify you." What was this man made of, anyway? "If you had come to me sooner——"

"I must beg leave to go," Dietz managed to say, clicked his heels, and reached the door.

The admiral felt indignant. No sooner are these youngsters out of the service, if only for a few months, than

their discipline goes to the devil. In every one of them a spirit of mutiny and revolt. But memories came back to him. Memories. He could no longer fight them down. He again felt his terror at the fury of the people. Those downtrodden and thousand-times betrayed people were driving him from the arms of his weeping wife—from his elegant house. He must get away—anywhere—out into the suburbs. In hunting-coat and fedora hat—discreetly—oh, God—so discreetly! Nobody must suspect that the unobtrusive man in the back room of the little inn had once held a place among the mightiest agents of the Kaiser's will. Only the evening before, he had remained in the Navy Building with associates in the same plight, and had spent a terrifying night, one that had ended in torturing doubt. The youngsters out there, to whom they had entrusted their safety, were they aware of their responsibility? He and his kind knew their duty. They were old officers, men of ripe judgment, the tried and the true. They must preserve themselves for the Fatherland, and in no way expose themselves to danger. Was it not their duty to stand in readiness for the moment when they should be needed. In the meantime, they must keep out of the way of the hotheads in the streets. Yes, the admiral remembered that. He remembered also that this young man had been a witness of his momentary weakness.

—"Nevertheless, I will see what I can do for you," he added, toning down his voice; "I never intended to reproach you. I look upon you as a comrade. Leave your address with me!"

Dietz knew that this man would never make use of his address. And still, he gave it. The broad stripes on the

man's sleeve compelled that. He even thanked the Admiral, respectfully.

But as he descended the carpeted stairs, a lump came into his throat. And for a moment, for a very brief moment, the magnificent hall, the stately ship-models, vanished as in a mist.

"Unsere Marine." His lips shaped the words mournfully, and he felt the blood in him freeze.

He walked slowly. It was his leave-taking. At the door stood the same young guard, the boy with the steel helmet. Two others had joined him, also in steel helmets, laughing and chewing and noisily regaling each other with stories.

Dietz sat down on the bench opposite the building. In the bright glare of the sun, the canal before him shimmered like a silver stream. The hanging chestnut-boughs were mirrored in the water, the blue sky smiled into the shining water, and swallows darted through the sun-warmed air.

He gazed at the proud Navy Building beyond the trees. It stood there like a tomb. The remembrance of a certain day came back to him, the day when, for the first time, he had been permitted to call himself a Cadet of the Kaiser's Marines—and the still happier day when he telegraphed his father: "We won Skaggerak. Me too." But that day had also opened his eyes. Comrades with whom he had laughed and joked only a few days before were now a feast for the hungry fishes. Many an officer was missing, his own navigation officer among them. The ensigns had talked about it in the mess hall. They had talked about "going up." Yes, that was the main thing, and they had made no bones about it. And then, there had been wholesale promotions. The officers

who had made room for the others were forgotten. For many, the battle had become nothing but an unexpected chance for promotion.

He gazed on the proud building and did not see it. For the mist that gathered and regathered before his eyes grew dense, above the dull green of the trees. Under such trees he had once walked with a woman, with that kind-hearted, happy woman, his mother. He could feel her warm hand. He could see himself walking beside her—proud of her pretty white dress. He was a boy then.

"Look at the poor man over there," she had said; "his feet are bound in rags and he looks so wretched. If he is hungry, ask him to come home with us and eat his fill."

"Shall I ask him?" How happy it made him, for he, too, had seen the beggar.

"Yes, ask him, but don't let the people see you——"

He could hear it plainly. She had always taught him kindness—she had always preached it to him, as far back as he could remember. "Why didn't she," Dietz asked himself, and his gaze hardened and he clenched his teeth, "why didn't she teach me to be hard? Why didn't she tell me that the most hateful of all beasts is man? How could she implant confidence in me, when she must have known that one never should have confidence!"

He slowly rose to his feet. He did not know how long he had sat there. He felt that he had become years older.

VII

"If Fred were only here," thought Dietz, as he unlocked the door. The disgust, the nausea he brought with him from the presence of the Admiral was more than he could endure. He felt gagged, sickened. But Fred was not there. Not even a word from him.

"Pit, don't you think he could have written," asked Dietz, patting the little dog, who was giving him a lively welcome.

On the table lay four letters. Dietz tore them open. Two returned, without a word, the copies of his service record; one was from an advertising agency: "A wide-awake young man with 20,000 marks taking our line into any territory can increase his income to a hundred thousand"; and the last was from his uncle. This he read twice.

> "My dear boy, enclosed you will find 100 marks. It is your promised allowance for two months. However, all further contributions will be discontinued. I was deeply hurt when you failed to acknowledge the last two payments.
>
> "Furthermore, my duty to my wife compels me to keep down my expenses. Times are hard, and every one must impose rigorous economies upon himself. This particularly applies to the youth of the land. The pretentious upbringing your father gave you, one not at all befitting your station, has often filled your aunt and me with misgivings. But the war was good discipline, and you have by this

time, no doubt, learned to cut your coat to fit your cloth.

"Things are going well with us, thank God. My practice still leaves me time to pursue my hobby, the cello, while your aunt is kept quite busy with her honorary committees. This work means the alleviation of many sorrows, the drying of many tears. It is surprising how much energy she has.

"If you should be in our neighborhood, we will be glad to see you. But, for the present, that is hardly to be expected. Be saving with your money; in Kiel I noticed you were an easy spender. One should turn over a 'groschen' ten times before spending it. Unfortunately, you've inherited from my poor departed sister a tendency towards extravagance. However, let us hope you will get on. And remember that young men to-day face the sacred task of putting our Fatherland once more on its feet through hard work. Show yourself worthy of the privilege!

Your uncle, Adolf."

He read the letter twice, and contemplated the 100-mark bill with amusement. He laughed! "Oh, Aunt Gertrude!" For of course it was she who had dictated the letter. She had always had the fear that his uncle, in his soft-heartedness, would slip him something extra! How thoughtful of his uncle to take his wife's anxiety into consideration, as he once had done in the hospital, when Dietz had been there after Skaggerak and had begged the doctor not to wire his father. But his uncle did not live far away. In a few hours he could drive over. "Do you mean to say," exclaimed the

staff physician, "that my colleague is your uncle!" And he notified the good man, who, under the circumstances, could not very well refuse to come. He was visibly astonished not to find his nephew dying, and gave the boy 50 marks—"But do not tell your aunt!"—together with a good sermon: —"The individual does not count; the outcome of the war depends upon the millions who are taking part. If you should fall by the wayside you can have the comforting thought—it was all for the Fatherland. Bear that in mind!"

Dietz remembered his uncle's deep emotion; he remembered how his comrades in their beds had listened slyly. Months later, when the story was recounted in the mess hall, it still made good entertainment.

"You will agree, Pit, that this gift of Mammon should be well invested. This is no ordinary 100-mark note; it is, so to speak, dipped in heart's blood. It would be a sacrilege to part wth it for mere vulgar sausage and bread. Oh, Pit, what a lot of high-minded friends and relatives we have! That's something we ought to celebrate."

And he was overcome with a hunger for music and laughter, for wine and forgetting, a hunger for gayety, for joy. It seemed an eternity since he had been happy, happy in the presence of happy people.

After a good sleep, Dietz, with Pit under his arm, found himself standing before the magnificent doorman of the Café Rosendiele. This functionary wore a livery of light gray and gold, pink stockings, and a three-cornered hat of rose satin. No wonder he felt himself above the common herd. But considering the scant food rations good citizens were supposed to live on these days, his legs looked suspiciously fat, and it was hard to tell whether it was his immense double chin or the solemnity of his puffy face that

gave him that look of dignity. At least, Dietz could not tell, in spite of the fact that he studied him with open curiosity. The doorman felt piqued, and his face grew still redder.

Dietz shook his head and remarked in mock pity, as he sailed past him, "You poor thing! You look sick!" The man stood with mouth agape, not knowing whether to feel insulted or not. Finally he decided on a hostile attitude.

"Dogs are forbidden," he angrily snapped.

Dietz looked him over. "You're cracked! Don't you see it's a guinea pig?" he said, and boldly walked in.

He chose a table far enough from the orchestra to satisfy Pit's sensibilities. At this distance, it was only when the violins reached the high notes that Pit's coat became ruffled, and his round pleading eyes took on a look of helplessness. He lay on his master's knees, heard the pretty women nearby say that he was too adorable for anything, that he was so sweet they could eat him up, and mistrustfully drew back when a jeweled hand wanted to stroke him. Dietz pretended not to see. And the admirers thought him horrid.

But the music—the violins sighed and exulted, sobbed and pleaded, and the cello—the cello with its warmth, with its compassion, set him trembling. And the cellist was so young; he had such a narrow wistful face, such sad eyes, deep in dreams. The music filled Dietz so completely that he did not hear the laughter around him—he did not see the surrendering eyes of the women.

At a neighboring table sat three men. Two wore red fezzes. The manager himself had led them to their places, and, bending low beside them, was waiting for their orders. The one without the fez, a German, ordered coffee and cognac for three. When the manager left, they sat back in silence. The large black eyes of the younger of the Orientals, with

their mild melancholy, went well with the mood of the cello. The other, in unconcealed boredom, leaned back sullenly. Now and then, he turned to the German with a question, to which the latter always answered in an unconditional *"oui"*; the Turk would then look at him hopefully and repeat his question, only to be annoyed by the inevitable *"oui"*.

Dietz laughed out loud! The enforced calm of the *"oui"*-sayer's face, behind which a tortured uneasiness was hiding, was funny. Dietz saw the older Oriental's nostrils quiver, as his fingers drummed the marble table. Bending forward, Dietz said to him, *"Mais ce n'est pas l'endroit ici!"*

The one addressed sat up electrified. Dietz bowed to the German, who hastened to explain: he had been asked by a friend, who was the interpreter for these two, to substitute for him for one short hour, until he joined them here; unluckily it turned out that the Turkish gentleman spoke only French, the Egyptian Prince only English, while he understood neither one. On the way to the restaurant matters had already gone badly. In order to quiet them he had kept on saying *"oui"* to the one and *"all right"* to the other. Beyond that he knew nothing.

Dietz began to translate. "The gentlemen can no longer stand their hunger, and, for their part, the coffee can go to the devil." He explained the misunderstanding in French to the Turk and in English to the Egyptian. The Turk was charmed, introduced himself as the Prince's host, and implored Dietz in the name of Allah and the Prophets to escort them to a restaurant where they could get something good to eat.

Dietz gave the two a look—quite *"Unsere Marine."*

"I'm not a tourist guide!" he said crisply.

The Turk replied in French that he would consider it an

honor to have the company of so accomplished a young man; the Prince said in English that, if he liked, they could take the orchestra with them; the third said in German that never again in his life would he do favors for any one, if he got nothing out of it; and Pit looked up at his master and, this time, said nothing. Dietz and the strangers made for the door—leaving the interpreter behind.

It turned out to be a delirious evening! not only because of the extraordinary way in which the Orientals flung aside their age-old taboos, not only because of Haessler's superb bill-of-fare and costly wines, not only because of the siren music. Yet that contributed to it—everything contributed to it—even their scandalous entrance. For again, Pit was challenged. Three oversized flunkies planted themselves at the door of the restaurant. They had to protect the diners in there from the intrusion of little Pit, trembling under his master's arm. The well-bred quiet of the large room was rudely broken by the noisy objections of Dietz. The fat, paunched Galicians and their half-naked women, who sat near the door, spoke loudly of German boorishness in public places, while at another table, the faces of a group of Russians plainly showed their disgust. The Prince and the Turk gazed with Oriental resignation on the promised paradise before them, and Pit, to whom the outcome seemed an issue of life and death, made no pretense of hiding his feelings. The Turk politely asked Dietz, "Are the Berliners perhaps objecting to me because so early in the war our well-meaning army broke down?" Dietz answered with disdain that it was not customary in the vicinity of a good kitchen to concern oneself with such trifles, and addressed a few French oaths to the enraged manager. That helped. That decidedly helped. The manager instantly be-

gan to bow and to scrape. He was now convinced that he had before him not an impoverished German, but an offended Frenchman, and in broken French he stammered his excuses, as best he could.

"A pack of swine," said Dietz in good, clear German, as they entered. Dietz marched first, with Pit under his arm, followed by the two Orientals, and, after them, as a retinue, came a waiter and two bus-boys. The guests now looked on with respect, a little flustered in the presence of the supposed French commission. They smiled delightedly at Pit, who, still believing that he was menaced, bared his sharp, little teeth.

That was how it began. The Turk requested that Dietz make up the menu, a menu that would do justice to the honor that he, the Turk, felt in playing the host. Dietz, evidently putting a high valuation on this honor, stepped to the buffet to have a better look at the lobsters and pheasants, while Pit stayed close to his heels, keeping a sharp look-out.

And then something happened.

A young man at a near-by table, alone in this wilderness of strangers, sat dejectedly before a half-empty bottle, smoking his cigarette. As he sat there brooding, his eye absently fixed on the mirror above the buffet, he caught sight of Dietz. He looked as though he had seen an hallucination. Dietz pointed to a giant lobster—some woman shrieked because some one had rudely shoved a chair against her knee, causing her wine glass to crash against her plate—and for the space of a few seconds, a few short seconds, a deathly stillness filled the room. Then a hoarse exultant cry——

"Dietz!—you—alive!"

And Dietz, who had just been explaining to the young

woman in attendance that he ate Heligoland lobsters only in an emergency, when the better sort were not to be had, wheeled about, stared at the face before him, forgot the lobster and the Turk and Haessler's, and cried out just as hoarsely—just as joyfully——

"He's alive!—Bartel's alive!"

They did not fly into each other's arms. The swivel-chair admiral in the navy building would have been well satisfied with the bearing of these two. They merely shook each other fiercely by the hand—without speaking. After all, what was there to say? They were alive. Each had believed that a watery grave had long ago swallowed the other—and now they stood face to face. What was there to say? But their eyes laughed, "It's great you're alive!" And like clamps of iron their hands tightened the grip.

Everybody looked on curiously. Good Lord! Such excitement! Just two people who happened to meet! Why the commotion? Dietz hurried back to his companions—like a boy flushed and silly with joy, while Bartel, still dazed by the sea of questioning eyes, stood staring at the lobsters—their scarlet shells glowed as through a fog—and grinned. "Pardon me," Dietz breathlessly said, thrilled to the marrow. "I have just met a friend—a comrade of the war. Of course I am at your service—but you can understand——"

He said it in French, and he said it in English. The strangers begged the honor of greeting this friend. Would the gracious gentleman perhaps grant that the four remain together? And they followed Dietz to the buffet where, in the presence of the big lobsters, the Prince declared that it would indeed be a great pleasure—and assured the Turk that this was his first really delightful evening in Berlin.

That settled the question.

The waiters began to serve them discreetly, and Dietz told the strangers, now in French, now in English, how it came that he and Bartel had thought each other dead. This fellow here, now leisurely sipping his wine, had often accompanied him on his flights. On their last trip, when they were heading for the Isle of Aalands, having started from Warnemünde, they had found themselves towards evening, in a fog, and had made the distressing discovery that their compass was out of order. A landing was impossible. Their choice lay between the sea beneath and a strip of alien coast in the distance which every instinct warned them to shun.

The fog had begun to thicken. After seventeen hours, their gas had given out. An emergency landing! Luckily the sea was calm. Their hopes had rested on the light pontoons over which the waves rolled.

"Do you remember, Bartel?"

While their provisions lasted, it had been bearable. After 24 hours a strong wind had come up. The sea had grown angry. With the last drop of gas they had flown up—only to come down again. Then more fog. Then thirst. After the second 24 hours, Bartel had attempted to jump overboard. The two had had a hard scuffle, but Dietz had managed to bind Bartel with a rope, and then had stuck the last of the biscuits in his mouth.

Soon the fog had lifted; but the sea was rough, and the pontoons had begun to split. Bartel had chosen this moment to prattle about his childhood and his father's house—a big, fine house, standing high and dry—and to declaim German history and German folklore. He had been moved to bewail the fact that his researches on the life of Roland would be lost

to the world, and had made back-breaking attempts to loosen the ropes that bound him.

"Do you remember, Bartel?"

"You can't imagine, gentlemen," continued Dietz, "the things that come into your head when you are drifting on the sea like that, and are waiting for something that never comes. Around you the endless water—over you the endless sky—in the distance, the oncoming clouds. You just naturally begin to count the hours left you. It must be your thirst that makes you see phantoms rise up out of the waves —your thirst that makes you see strange monsters. And then, you get so you forget that things are not exactly comfortable with you. Bartel forgot it, altogether. He began to sing *'Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,'* just as the right pontoon split. The machine almost capsized before I could untie him. Fortunately I was still able to free him and get him into a life preserver. When the second pontoon broke, my man disappeared. I saw nothing more of him. As for me, I found the water too wet. I lashed myself to the plane."

He paused. His voice had become husky. Bartel rested his glistening eyes on the speaker, and could only smile.

Dietz resumed. "Luckily, I was sighted. My rescuers towed the capsized plane and untied me; and when I came to and recalled the scrap of history in which I was playing my tiny part, I overheard a sharp dispute between the ship's doctor and the captain. The doctor wanted to put me in the isolation ward, while the captain stood out for a good breakfast of beefsteak and porter. He was a knowing man. In a few days I was able to report for service."

The lobster was served. They drank wine. Again and again, Bartel found himself squeezing his friend's hand, while Dietz translated the story to the Prince.

"Fine fellows," said the Prince.

Bartel now took up the story. Some Swedish fisherman had found him and had taken him to port. It had been a long time before they brought him back to health. Then he had been interned. And to-morrow, he was leaving for Munich. At present, he was stopping in the suburbs with an old schoolmate, who had been forced that day to attend a meeting and had left Bartel alone to see the sights of Berlin.

Dietz and Bartel beamed at each other with moist, shining eyes, and as they emptied their glasses, they saw themselves drifting once more in the fog. Over endless gray water. For sixty-three long hours. In the thickening fog. Every hour an eternity. And they were only eighteen years old.

Suddenly, Dietz laughed—a rasping, bitter laugh—he heard a voice saying: "You could have drawn a pension of sixty marks a month, which, of course, you've now forfeited—" But the Turk assured Dietz of his heartfelt delight in having met him, and the Prince announced that it was only his consideration for his subjects that prevented him from making a flight.

Later in the evening, when they were exchanging cards, Dietz came upon Hermann Seke's letter. It was then that the people at the neighboring tables found his hilarity infectious.

"Bartel, dear old Bartel," he entreated, "you must do me a favor! As soon as you get to Munich, send a telegram to this chap, who has no end of confidence in my connections" and he jotted something down on a card: "Detained on important business. At present am supplied. Future connection likely." He added Hermann's address.

Now the mood took possession of them. Suddenly the lights went out. The city, still in its zeal for conservation, turned off the electric current at ten o'clock, and large torch-like candelabra wrapped the room in a discreet semi-darkness. In this semi-darkness they drank their champagne, the Turk admiring the skill with which Dietz filled the glasses. This semi-darkness let down the barriers between them and the tables nearby, much to Pit's consternation. For in the shelter of this half light, though he still lay on his master's lap, a young woman was playing with his tail.

"Stop that!" exploded her escort, with a murderous look at Dietz. The man's bald head and enormous body suggested Kogel & Co., which made Dietz decidedly unsympathetic.

Dietz encouraged the young woman to take hold of the dog's paw.

"How sweet!" she cooed.

"Let the beast alone!" shouted the man.

"Gently, gently—" cautioned Dietz. "The hound doesn't like a rough tone,—he's been trained to go at rogues."

The man sputtered.

But Dietz said in mock apology, "Oh—nothing at all—just a little precaution. He is my sole protector and will jump straight for your throat, if you as much as say one insulting word to me——"

"Waiter!" called the man fumbling for his wallet. By this time the friendly young woman had Pit on her lap, and she just had discovered that he was a perfect darling, and that the evening was becoming interesting. The Turk agreed; and so, with a courtly bow Dietz invited Pit's admirer to sit at his table. In the confusion that followed, it was due to the manager's acrobatic nimbleness that only the wine

cooler was thrown over, instead of the table, and that Pit and Dietz stood entirely vindicated.

"I declare!" exclaimed Dietz, surveying the array of empty bottles, "as good as a send-off before a flight."

It was long past midnight when the visitors from the Orient took leave of Dietz and Bartel at their hotel door, with repeated thanks for a charming evening; and it was an hour later when the young men reached the suburbs, where, Bartel recalled, his host lived.

"There's a garden in front," said he. His tongue was heavy, and his step not at all certain. "I left the window open—first floor."

"Know the street?" asked Dietz.

No. That he had forgotten. Completely forgotten. Nevertheless, he was sure you had to follow the car tracks. Then to the right. And then, around the corner.

Arm in arm they set out. To help steady their course, they kept their eyes on a lamp post ahead; and once in a while even steered for it. They stumbled over stones, leaned against fences, watched the road run weirdly up a steep hill and abruptly down again, marvelled at the zigzag of the car tracks, and took it ill when passersby called to them, banteringly. Pit followed sedately, ashamed to join in their deflections to the right and left. Disapprovingly watching his master's sudden lurches toward the roadway, he would stand still and follow again only when a respectable course was resumed. The conversation was grave, and suited to the occasion. They talked about the rings of Saturn and the eclipses of the moon. They did not see the slender crescent, laughing down on them in silver raillery. Dietz

solemnly predicted that at any moment the full moon would come out.

At last, Bartel remarked that the street looked familiar. There stood the front garden, there the open window. With due ceremony, he invited Dietz and Pit to spend the night. After much fumbling in his pockets, he found the key, and endeavored to unlock the door. He gave it up. Dietz then made an attempt. The key broke and remained sticking in the lock.

"Now you'll have to go through the window," said Dietz. Bartel took off his coat, and thrusting it into the other's hands, began the difficult business of entering through the upper window. The glass crashed in—and Bartel's curses rang out. He could not squeeze through. A woman shrieked, and Bartel, now a little sobered, said "I think we've made a mistake!"

"Let's run!" said Dietz.

But that was not so easy. Bartel's wide shoulders were caught in the narrow window. As he squirmed to get out, there came another crash of glass. The female voice grew shriller and shriller. Up and down the street, windows were thrown open; dogs began to bark; Pit howled; and Dietz, hugging Bartel's coat and cane, stood bewildered.

"Himmelkreuz—donnerwetter," swore Bartel, making a last effort. He was free now. "That confounded woman——"

"Murder! Robbers! Help!" she screamed.

One jump—and Bartel landed on the other side of the hedge.

Dietz did not take in the situation, but he suspected danger. He had better call for help. He remembered to reach in his vest pocket for his ship whistle. In former days,

whenever he used it, it had always brought him assistance.

It shrilled through the night. The stillness was torn. The sleepers started up. Mothers rushed to their children, wringing their hands. "Don't go out!" they told their men, "don't risk your life." "Let the volunteers attend to it!" But the volunteers, the citizen police, happened that night to be two schoolmasters. The street's gallant defenders crouched beneath a hawthorne bush at the crossing, in a sweat of fear lest they be discovered.

Dietz laughed: "A regular rescue!" In the distance sounded an answer to his whistle—a glad, piercing answer. Bartel lifted his head. "That's Hein Alz, my friend. Come, we turned down the wrong street!"

They made off. At the end of the street they ran into Hein. Bartel did the talking while Dietz stood and marveled.

"A thing like that could never happen in a plane," said he, as Hein closed the door behind them.

They found it was too early—or was it too late?—to go to bed. Hein brought out some cherry brandy, some coffee, and the alcohol burner.

The three sat there, and brought the past to life again. They talked of battles, of reunions, of comrades that were no more, and of the glories of a Germany that was no more. The water sang softly in the kettle. And deep and secure sounded Pit's breathing. Rolled into a ball, he lay under his master's chair, believing himself once more on board. To complete his happiness only one thing was missing. That was the paymaster's airdale. Back in November, some one on the street had killed him.

VIII

One thing was certain. Try as he would, Colonel von Stauffen could not bring himself to like his new calling. "It's the dawn of a new world!" he said one morning to the cashier, who had asked him how he enjoyed his work. "Life for me is just beginning. We soldiers missed a lot!" The cashier pretended to believe him and advised him to brush up on his figures. "Some combinations you must know off hand—on the tip of the tongue." That is why the colonel did his figuring in the morning as he dragged himself wearily to the bank—5,000 marks at 2½% are 125 marks. 15,000 at 4¼% are 1250 marks. 25,000 at 6¼% are—but he always got muddled and found himself reliving the Battle of the Marne. Beside his battery. Shell holes—wherever you looked, shell holes. To get a good position, you had to get to the hill. But the enemy were intrenched on this hill. They had opened fire. Every shot hit its mark! Where was I? 25,000 marks at 6¼%. Splendid how those boys acquitted themselves! Wherever you looked—blood—mud—iron. For two days, that fellow there squealed—stuck on the barbed wire—and the poor devil in the marsh still waited for help. What heroes they were. And one after another, they were torn away. Then the sergeant. Like a tree he fell! And then, the ground was torn up—and sand and loam and iron rained and pelted down. Then came darkness——

Hard, this 6¼%. It would be easier on paper, or learned by rote like the multiplication-tables. Formerly, one's figuring was confined to the artillery. No one had time to bother with bank interest. The banker was there for that. How

much one had to forego! The only thing that mattered then was service of one's country. Yes, everything had to make way for that. What would have become of the batteries had the men stood there juggling accounts?

6¼ percent—what a poser! 4½% is much easier. And he multiplied. But something kept running through his head, something that even in the hospital had made him dizzy, something over which he debated endlessly, endlessly with his wife's father—a theme that would, until the end of time, remain a riddle for him. Why in the world did Ludendorf order that attack? Couldn't its failure have been foreseen? God only knows! He himself believed in victory. Everybody at the front believed in victory. How could they have had anything to do with the horrible business—they never suspected that not a single report was truthful. How could they have let those splendid boys remain one day longer in the shambles! "Victory!" hummed the telephone wires. "Victory!" went the call from grave to grave—until—one day—he saw the Americans!

The colonel stood still. He breathed heavily. He stared before him. With terrifying clearness he recalled the day he saw the first American prisoners. Well-fed and clean, they stood in their faultless outfits near his men, near his hungry, ragged men. The Americans in shining puttees—with ruddy faces, looking with contempt at his mud-covered boys. Everyone in the battery felt it: "There stand the victors!" And their blood ran cold!

How does it go? 4½ percent—he walked on as if in a trance.

That was the day his last hope died. That day, there was no joking. No one looked into his comrades' eyes—afraid to read in them his own fears.

4½ percent——

Why should it be so hard? How much better to work like a machine, to write the numbers down and learn them by heart.

Too bad about the sergeant! Twenty-five years together! It warmed you through and through to look into his faithful eyes. You could trust him as you trusted yourself. After he went, it had been so lonely——

Again, the colonel stopped. He looked at his wooden leg. To-day it tugged and twinged. And his foot burned and tore—the foot that was no longer there. He leaned heavily on his stick. He took off his hat. From his forehead rolled drops of sweat.

"Hello!" came a voice.

Here in the banking district, the people, like a stream, were moving on their way—as in by-gone days they had poured through cathedral doors.

"Hello!"

A dozen heads turned. Glances shot this way and that, but it was hard to tell who had called. Herr von Stauffen looked about. The voice sounded close to him. As if awakened from a dream, he stood there staring. But he, too, saw nothing.

Near the curb stood a large grimy ash-cart; against it, the reins hanging over his arm, leaned a man wearing a leather apron.

"Good morning, Herr Oberst!" called the man, without moving from the spot.

"Good morning," replied the colonel as he would have done to the letter-carrier or the chimney-sweep.

"Long time since I've seen you, Herr Oberst——"

What bold eyes the fellow had! With folded arms, he

leaned against the dirty wagon—just as the lieutenants used to lean against the wall as they watched the dancers.

Silently, the colonel limped towards him.

"I, too, hardly knew Herr Oberst," said the man with the bold eyes. "Only when Herr Oberst took his hat off——"

Herr von Stauffen again stood still. He fastened his eye on the speaker. Some one from the battery? The man wore over his hair a black, tight skull cap, like an aviator's.

"Do you know me?" asked Herr von Stauffen.

The colonel stepped nearer still—searched the features—saw the strong jaw—the clear curve of the nose. His eyes stared, he bent forward——

"Impossible!" he cried hoarsely. "Impossible!"

A curt laugh.

"Why, Herr Oberst?"

"Pringwitz of the third squadron——!"

"At your command, Herr Oberst!"

"But in the name of God!—how can it be?" And before him loomed the elegant captain of horse, faultless, correct, the terror of all the boys. He——?

"One has to live, Herr Oberst! Will Herr Oberst permit me to omit standing at attention? My wagon-mate is a stickler. May I inquire how Herr Oberst feels?" And Pringwitz looked warmly at the man who had become so gray in those few months—so gray—and so old.

"Thank you, thank you—only I can't understand——"

He really did not understand. This fellow had made a good match. His father-in-law was a big land owner.

"Herr Oberst knows nothing about my divorce? The usual thing, Herr Oberst—a son that was not mine. I proved it by my furlough. I wouldn't be made a fool of. And now I'm getting on fine."

"But did nothing else come your way?"

"No—nothing else. In fact, I got this job through pull. A member of my squadron vouched for my ability to handle horses. Herr Oberst objects to dust and ashes? We were used to that! When for days and days we lay in the stinking slime, it was worse than this. Now I can at least wash myself at night. The pay is good, Herr Oberst, and as for mental diversion, I can provide that for myself. The man on the wagon with me was also a trench-hog, and his wife ran off with another, because she was too finicky to put up with the pimply skin and nervous twitchings her husband brought back with him. So you see, he and I are in the same boat——"

Across the way, a man with a sack on his back was coming towards them. He was covered with dust and ashes. In his hand, he held a chunk of sausage, and he looked at it tenderly, as he chewed.

"It is a great pleasure to see you looking so well, Herr Oberst," the cavalry captain said, bowed quickly, and climbed to the seat. His mate followed. The chap was in excellent humor.

"In der Heimat, in der Heimat—da gibt's ein wiedersehen," he warbled, and threw a kiss to a passing girl, who shot him a saucy look.

The colonel continued on his way. But when he reached the bank, he had to sit down, he was trembling so. Some one brought him water. Everything around him began to spin. "It's the heat," he said. But it was not hot. And still, he could not pull himself together. The bookkeeper advised him to go home.

"What's the big idea having those old cripples around?" asked the messenger boy. And everybody agreed with him.

And yet, they all felt sorry for the colonel. Good lord! It can't be so easy, day after day, to come to the bank with a wooden stump like that! And such an old man too! Furtively, they watched how his trembling hands fumbled for the materials in the drawer—how the muscles on his face twitched. Drops of sweat stood on his high pale forehead. And his eyes looked so heavy! He groped for the calendar; he stared at the columns to be added,—unable to make his mind obey. Before him stood Pringwitz, the favorite of the regiment, the darling of the ladies. It made your heart smile to see him on his bay, on the riding course. He used to be the life of every party. Such dash—such abandon! And now——

The colonel gazed before him. But it was no longer Pringwitz whose fate gave him torture. It was Fred. A nameless fear stabbed him—and a shame—a shame that at this time of life, he, the father, had not reached a place where he could help his only son. Perhaps in three years—who knows—? In three years would he be alive?

Again! 6 plus 7 plus 3, counted his eyes. But he stood beside his battery—twenty-five years ago. The sergeant was then a youngster, with fiery eyes. He stood with his orders before him, before young Captain von Stauffen, who looked impatiently at the order book, impatiently at the young man.

"What's up, Kellerman?"

"Respectfully report—I have a son!"—and his honest face had beamed, and his eyes had been wet with joy.

"Well, well!—Kellerman—" and the captain's heart hammered away—"Let's exchange congratulations, then; I have one, too!"

That was a day! God—that was a day! What hopes! what

plans! And all he was going to do for the boy! And to-day? Even the family name was useless to Fred! And young Kellerman? He had been killed in the first year of the war.

Once more: 6 plus 7 plus 3.

But his wife? His wife? What would become of her, if he should die before he could make anything of himself? What would her last days be like? Her money long ago had been used up; her family had their own troubles. Would it come to charity? His bravest, truest comrade—charity!

The girl at the typewriter let out a little scream and sprang up. She got there just in time to catch the fainting man. The bookkeeper sprinkled water on him, while the others looked on and gave advice.

A young director came upon the scene—the one about whom there was so much talk on the exchange—he had just paid half a million marks for an automobile for his fiancée. He threw a casual glance at the unconscious man and was surprised that he had been sent for. "I'm no first aid station!" He added something to the effect that people like that were nothing but a bother, and that they should have known better than to disturb him for such a trivial matter. The messenger boy was thrilled at sight of the young director and the latter's faultless tailoring, his perfect grooming. He was the boy's ideal of a director. The pearl in his necktie must have cost a fortune. The boy meant to have patent-leather shoes with cloth uppers like that, some day.

In an hour, the colonel was well enough to go home alone. His colleagues expressed their hopes for his recovery; and after he left, some even thought the incident worth a few words. The typist sprinkled herself with toilet water, and was overcome with pity and kindliness. "My God," said she, "they're not altogether to blame for the way

things turned out. My father says there are some decent ones among them, and he is thankful to this day that he was in the army, where he learned to toe the mark. But he says that if we had won the war, we'd be even worse off with their Militarism and their Kultur—and that it would be for the best if they'd all die out."

The colonel did not return to the bank. His chief courteously wrote: "We regret that you are too weak to meet the strain required of you, and that you are not entitled to any compensation from the benefit fund——"

"I have resigned," said Herr von Stauffen to his wife, "I am hardly a man for figures!"

And she pretended to be delighted with the news.

"Thank God, that at last you yourself admit it!"

But she wrote to Fred that he should come at once.

It was a postcard, and Dietz read it—read it, and rubbed his chin. What did it mean? Fred had told him that, for the present, he was staying with his parents.

"A nasty mix-up!" he said to Pit, "You should see the woman——"

That was really too much. Fred tied to Frau Kogel!

"It's none of our business, Pit," said he, "but what shall we do with his poor parents? You can't expect me to write him at Frau Kogel's."

Besides, he had no time. He was making the rounds for a job again, and once more begged to assure everybody, in painstaking letters and in person, of his readiness to do any kind of work. Often he looked sadly at the blue cloth suit he planned to sell. From day to day, the outlook became more serious. He persuaded himself that he was seeing things in the wrong light—that everything must work out for the

best. Thousands had found positions, why shouldn't he? One must have patience. That was it! And not make any demands! If people were only not so mistrustful——

Some one is looking for a chauffeur. He ran over there. A villa near the Tiergarten, unmistakably "newly rich," a butler with a knowing leer; and then the master of the house, in a quilted lounging robe. He asks for credentials. A glance—he returns them.

"I need a chauffeur!"

"At your service. I have the honor to apply!"

"So I see. But I'm a man of feelings. Besides, I was once an officer. The reserves. Understand? And that, in a way, is being on the same footing. You see—it can't be expected that I and my chauffeur——"

"Please rest assured, I shall never overstep my place!"

"I told you, didn't I? I'm kind of soft-hearted. I'd have to think twice before giving you a piece of my mind——"

"You will have no cause for dissatisfaction. If you will be good enough to look upon me as an ordinary chauffeur, you will be doing me the greatest service."

"I believe you. But where do I come in? I'm no philanthropist; and besides, I know what consideration I owe my comrades——"

So he'd go away—and again see, at the door, the butler's face—a face better suited to the master's delicate sensibilities.

But there is still left an advertisement for a truck driver. He has just been so foolishly snobbish—the position in the villa did seem to be better than oil-barrel and petroleum-can juggling.

A half dozen young fellows stand there waiting—the usual truck-driving sort, bleary-eyed, unkempt. They wear the yellow puttees of the day. They see Dietz. Instantly

they form a barrier. Their hostile eyes ask, "What does *he* want?"

And when the foreman beckons Dietz, they begin to grumble and murmur among themselves.

The foreman is a bit taken back. He returns the papers.

"I can't use you."

"Why not?"

"Because you're not one of us, that's why."

"I wear working clothes!"

"For my part, you can wear your Sunday clothes. But our customers aren't used to seeing your kind around here —and especially since you are from the Navy. Privates are not so bad. But officers—*Not much!*

"At least give me a trial!"

"Nothin' doin'! I'm a man of principle——"

As Dietz comes out, the boys at the door jeer at him.

That was yesterday.

"Better luck to-day, eh Pit?"

For to-day, he was headed for the Employment Bureau for ex-officers—where men like himself were looked after and given a chance to make a new start in life.

"Let's be satisfied, Pit, if it's enough to feed us. We don't need much else. On the side, I can learn to typewrite, and next year I'll strike something better. But we must have the price of a loaf of bread."

To this Pit agreed, and they started out.

He was indebted to Shorty Pretz for the tip. Shorty's father, who owned a farm, had obtained some hands from this Bureau, and had had no cause for complaint. Every day the Bureau listed jobs of all kinds, to suit every taste. Thousands already had been placed.

"I can't understand," Shorty Pretz had said to Dietz,

"how it is that you never ran across the place before." Toward Dietz, a former comrade in the Navy, Shorty felt a magnanimous condescension. And why not? He could well afford to. The Pretz family was well provided for. For Papa Pretz had providentially come upon a wizard of a man, who had perceived that Germany was threatened with a crisis because of her shortage of brushwood, brooms, and who had had the presence of mind to import a shipment of such brooms from Bulgaria. When this man of great decision met Pretz Senior, he had possessed, in addition to his supply of brooms, a large consignment of potato bags, price still open. Herr Pretz had had opportunity enough to find out what a gifted man this new-found friend was. The man of the potato sacks happened at the moment to be looking for a live-wire agent for his goods—an agent who would, at the same time, fill the place of tutor to his young son. What was more natural than the founding of a Commission House in which Pretz, Jr., as partner and tutor, saw with pleasure how the common lupine seed grown on his father's farm became Mexican pearl mocha, how wagon loads of beet sugar, made from the paternal sugar beets, together with their wagons, disappeared without a trace, only to produce receipts of arrival in Antwerp, and how potatoes, eagerly awaited in Berlin, brought five times their price by turning up miraculously somewhere in Switzerland. Within a short time, the firm had acquired a splendid reputation, and big farmers had begun to make overtures. After six car loads of frozen cabbages had been dumped upon the starving Berliners, and some horses had mysteriously been purchased, Shorty Pretz declared that he had no regrets at having deserted the Navy, since it was becoming quite plain that his talents lay elsewhere.

However, his advice regarding the officers' employment bureau was sound, and Dietz was already making up his mind as to the kind of position he would accept.

"It can't be office work, Pit," said he; "you'd get fat and mangy. Auto driving I'd like, but an officer's discharge queers that—whereas truck-repairing has proven too genteel for us. In the merchant marine, there's no chance—we're taboo. Mining, too, is out—you couldn't stand the life, Pit. Well, we'll see!"

They arrived.

Dietz looked at the house. It was a sober, stately building in a good neighborhood. But the steps were worn and dirty. A layer of dust covered the windows. "Funny," thought Dietz, "that charity should always look so unappetizing!"

The stairs creaked and groaned and made sounds like human sighs. The grimy walls, the blind window-panes, the thick warm air were just the thing to put applicants into the right frame of mind. Young men who entered that house hopeful and self-assured became disheartened after mounting three steps. That was as it should be. But one did not have to knock. One walked in.

The waiting room was crowded. Around the table, covered with newspapers, leaned the applicants, young and old, the wounded and the whole. The more zealous ones were reading the long-winded rules and notices posted on the walls, possibly with the object of evading the eyes of a chance friend, of being spared from saying, "That's how matters stand with me!" All, without exception, wore the black and white ribbon of the iron cross; all, without exception, wore ill-fitting civilian dress, in which they looked awkward and out of place. Their selections of neckties, col-

lars, and spats was proof of their life-long estrangement from things like that.

Every newcomer was received with suspicion. Another competitor!

Even a greeting was grudged.

"Good morning!" Dietz walked in breezily upon the assembly.

"This way please!" From the corner near the window, came a thin officious voice.

Dietz turned to obey. At a narrow unpainted table sat a flat-bosomed, middle-aged woman. At her skinny neck, a gold brooch with the seven-pointed crown, gleamed dully, and under it a red-cross pin. Her glance was cool and disdainful. Honorary appointees used to have that glance. But she looked the kind that would draw her pay.

"Register your name!"

She shoved him a blank on which his former affiliations, his present occupation, and his wishes were to be put down; then she serenely took up her eyelet embroidery. But as soon as Pit, innocently and quite unawed, began to sniffle at her thin leys, she turned red.

"Dogs are forbidden!"

"But the sign doesn't say so," said Dietz. "It only says smoking is forbidden!"

"That's taken for granted!" snapped the woman, now turning white with anger.

"Such a little dog." Dietz could hardly keep from laughing. "How easily something could happen to him outside!"

The woman's lips became a sharp line.

"The rules must be obeyed!"

That sounded too much like a reprimand given to a lieu-

tenant in the presence of his company. Dietz flung back his head.

"Yes madam. Then be good enough to make your rules public!"

Strange that women of this sort should all look alike. Fräulein So-and-So had had an expression just like that when she distributed Christmas packages to the soldiers at the front. It had sickened her to see those lovely things go out of her hands. Countess Leonore had acted just so, when an ordinary private instead of an officer turned up in her convalescent home. It was strange that these men here filling the room—fighters, all of them—should submit to this woman's tone. Each had his scars; not a man of them—wearing his Emperor's coat—would have taken a word from her. But to-day, begging their bread, cringing for their jobs, having shed their manhood with their coats, they no longer defended themselves. Like as not, they hoped to get into her good graces.

"And anyway," shrilled the woman, glancing spitefully at the paper Dietz had handed her, "you're a navy man!"

She made the accusation as though he had deeply offended her. Immediately, the others in the room stopped reading. They looked up at the intruder. At last they felt united, as one man—the Land Forces versus the Navy! A sudden babble arose. One of the younger ones went so far as to sing out *"Unsere Marine,"* at which another snickered.

Dietz' first impulse was to ask where he should next apply. But the question now died on his tongue. The *"Unsere Marine"* taunt was responsible for that. It made him aware of the blue cloth he wore—in spite of the bone buttons, the blue cloth that still set him apart.

"Come Pit!"

"You can write down the address——"

"Thanks. I'll get it from the doorman. Good morning, Fräulein!"

He stamped out of the room. Pit followed. And the latter, since he also wanted to make a good exit, bared his teeth and growled menacingly, keeping close to his master's heel, as though running a gauntlet. Past experience must have taught him.

The doorman knew the address. It was not far—up a rear staircase, where his wife did the cleaning.

Dietz opened the door of the Welfare Bureau for Officers of the Navy. The first thing to meet his eye was a large, heavily-framed poster of the Battleship *Heligoland,* facing the door and hung above the collection-box for widows and orphans. He glanced away quickly from the memory-provoking picture and fixed his attention upon a matter-of-fact oak desk, piled high with fat ledgers and newspapers. At the desk sat a man—a man in a uniform—*with* buttons. He wore the Distinguished Service Cross. His closely shorn head exposed the scar of a sword-cut, not yet fully healed. Dietz felt the blood rush to his head. His heart gave a leap —he could hear it wildly pounding. Good God! Can it be! What a coincidence! Can it be the submarine commander, Captain Valentine, beside whose bed he had lain two long months in the hospital at Brugge, in a little room up on the top floor—the same Captain Valentine who had rescued him from certain death that night when, in a delirium of fever, he had wanted to jump out of the window, because he saw himself in his burning plane and thought the jump would save his life—the man who had helped to pass the heavy hours, with his long-winded dissertations on Spinoza and the Milky Way, the Greeks and Dionysius, and the wisdom of

Lao-Tse—and who never once had been insulted when his listener fell asleep? So burningly, so compellingly, did Dietz gaze on him that the man looked up. His pale, narrow face suddenly flushed red. His eye-lids half closed, as if he were looking through the sight of a gun. Then his eyes slowly opened, and he looked warmly at Dietz, who now stood before him, erect, at attention.

"Reuter—You!"

The captain had forgotten nothing—nothing!—not even the night before his discharge from the hospital, when Dietz cleaned him out at "Skat," and when he admiringly had remarked, as he passed over his winnings: "We have to hand it to you fliers!"

To think that it was still possible to laugh like that! That it was still possible to be so happy!

"This is Pit," said Dietz. The little fellow was deliriously spinning around their feet. Later, as the two sat down at the desk and began to talk in hushed voices, Pit rolled himself up into a ball under his master's chair. Dietz spoke of Germany's great hope, now forever buried, and of the people's ingratitude.

The captain listened in increasing astonishment.

"It looks as though you and I have changed places, Reuter. Are you the pessimist now? True, we did not win the war. No disgrace in that. I'm not ashamed to belong to a nation that was brought to defeat only after the whole world had banded itself against it. There must be something to us if they feared us as much as all that. Gratitude did you say? Wasn't it for the love of the Fatherland that we were supposed to have staked our lives?—And even love; don't you know, by this time, you reckless youngster, that love is never without its element of selfishness. The fleet is done

for—sunk. Yes, but that the fleet was, ever, our only hope—that I deny. Every schoolboy knows that after our defeat at Jena came our victory at Sedan. To-day the nation's body lies bleeding, but the spirit lives. That's the main thing. There's hope, so long as the German spirit lives."

Dietz listened to him in amazement. Could it be that this man knew nothing of what had happened? That he knew nothing of the party hatreds and strife, the street fights of Berlin, when machine guns and barbed wire had welcomed the home-coming troops—the troops that only then, upon the soil of their own Fatherland, had learned the true meaning of defeat. Yes, he did now.

"I ought to know—I'm on the extradition-list. The bravery for which I won the cross is now charged to me as a crime of war, and the chances are that my countrymen themselves will deliver me up to the victors. It's all in the game. Don't forget, we promised our people victory. It was for that they froze, and starved, and bled through four long years. And we brought them defeat and shame. To me, the wonder is that they let us off so easily—that they permitted those in the high places to slip safely out of the country. The great nations of the past dealt more severely with their beaten soldiery. History will one day marvel at the moderation and the docility of our revolutionists. Give us ten years, we'll be in the smoke of battle again."

Strange how calmly he said it, and stranger still that his calm should communicate itself to Dietz. Nevertheless, Dietz shot a question at him. No sooner was it out than he felt sorry and ashamed. "Are you, Herr Kapitain, a Communist?" The captain smiled. "I believe not. But I read Tolstoi, and the New Testament, and Karl Marx; and you perhaps know that my father is a historian. You see, I have

a tradition to live up to. My great grandfather took part in the republican uprising of 1848; he had to flee with Carl Schurz. Nevertheless, he was later made mayor of the town. To this day, you can see his memorial in the town-hall. We must learn to forget our past. We must look to the future; not to a future on the seas, but to the real future. It lies in us—in you—in me—in our youth. Monarchy? Republic? It's all the same. It is *men* the country needs—men to put her on her feet again. Just at present, we are in an unspeakable mess. We must find our way out." He paused; he pressed his hands for a moment against his tired eyes, and smiled. "Thanks. I see you did not fall asleep this time. In the hospital I must have hit upon the wrong topics. Now, tell me, what brought you here?"

And Dietz told him. He told him about the death of his father, about the mistrust and suspicion he had met with everywhere, about Kogel & Co., and how he had struck Kogel in the face. His voice grew husky. He did not notice that the man who, only a moment before, had been so coolly philosophizing over Germany's future, had turned pale to the lips.

Dietz stopped talking.

The captain was deeply stirred. He paced up and down the length of the room. He lit a fresh cigarette and fought to regain his calm.

"It wasn't you that riled that swine. It was the organization you stand for. He paid off a life-long grudge. You'll admit we *were* something extraordinary. We *did* think ourselves something exalted. You know as well as I do that there never was a stripling cadet in the navy, sporting the crown on his sleeve, who did not think it beneath him to salute an old army man—whatever his rank. I'd like to

see those cocky snips as admirals! The Lord pity the land-rats! We thought ourselves God's chosen ones—and now they're making us pay. History does repeat itself. In the French Revolution, the first guns were turned on the King's navy. Admirals and officers had to pay with their heads. But we are alive, Reuter! Come now, be frank, to stand well with Kogel, would you give up the memory that you once belonged? Don't jump at me! We're not in Brugge! What's the matter? Heart? You ought to be in the country. You need the country air. It's a good thing you came here——"

Dietz slowly regained his color. His heart action was getting back to normal. He was able to apologize to Valentine for the trouble he had given him. With one hand, Valentine held a cold compress over Dietz' heart, while he rubbed his temples with the other, all the while calling down a flood of malediction upon Kogel & Co. When Dietz was himself again, they began to look through the lists.

"If you care to go on a farm," he said, "I can place you right away. Sorry the pay is so small. But I advise you to take it—at least until things settle down a bit. Last week, fourteen men went out to Pommerian and Mecklenburger farms——"

"As what?"

"Partly as housemen. I don't deny that it's an exploitation. Besides getting cheap hands, the farmers get a reputation for being good patriots. There are openings for guards against farm-marauders, for some experienced overseers, and for so-called volunteers to learn farm work. But these apprentices must pay for their own keep."

"I have no money," said Dietz.

"Three men are wanted to work under the owner. Two lieutenant captains have already promised——"

"And the pay?"

"Two marks a day!"

Dietz drew himself up. "No farm hand works for that!"

"Of course not! Do you suppose they take us on out of kindness? But I would rather put up with anything in the country than starve here in the city!"

"Well—," said Dietz, as he looked at Pit, "I guess you're right!"

"Sorry there's nothing better," said the captain, "I've been here eight days, and as soon as something comes my way, I shall leave. This bureau may mean well by us, but the good places never come here. They are grabbed up by friends and relations. I'd take a job in the country, no matter what. I dread the misery I see here day after day—the misery I cannot alleviate. But my wife had twins four weeks ago, and she comes from poor people."

Dietz swallowed the lump that choked him. He thought of the country, the wide, laughing fields in the country. Oh! To walk again on the brown earth! And forget, under blue skies. To forget! It could never be worse than at Kogel's. And when the day's work was done, there were the stars to look at, and, best of all, it would be good for Pit's health.

He could now say, with a laugh, "As ensign, I had only sixty-three marks a month. With the prospect of becoming an admiral, it is true. But coal-bunking wasn't exactly play. You say, two navy men are going?" He accepted the job, and, after hearty thanks, took his leave.

"Dir woll'n wir unser Leben weih'n, Der Flagge schwarz-weiss-rot," he softly hummed on the shaky stairs.

But on the street, he sang no more. For suddenly, a few

steps before him, he saw Fred. At the latter's side sauntered a smart little woman, in a dressy gray costume and a large black hat. She was dangling a silver purse from side to side, and Fred was carrying some packages. The two were conversing intimately. The woman certainly was not Frau Kogel.

Why should a hot wave mount to his temples? Why should he whistle for Pit, who had poised his little nose to sniff the air? Why should he find himself in the grip of a quick, sharp pain?

He could see there was an understanding between the two walking ahead. The woman swayed boldly at the hips, inviting the stealthy looks of some passing men. Once, she laughed aloud, and as she turned around to look at some one, Dietz recognized her. It was the woman who had wept so heartbreakingly at the General's funeral.

Dietz stood still. For a moment he hesitated, then quickly turned down another street. He said to himself, "Here I trusted him, and all the while he's played his secret game." He recalled the day he had joked with Fred about the perfume on his jacket, and the rebuff Fred had shot at him: "Are you spying on me?" Now it was plain. Dietz had turned crimson at the thought of Fred's suspicion. And it was all for this woman!

In the late afternoon, he reached the door. A key was stuck in it. Fred was waiting.

Dietz remained standing, unable to say a word. Fred gave a short laugh as he looked into his friend's dazed face. "What's up? Is this the happy welcome I get?"

"I didn't expect you," and Dietz shut the door, "but I'm glad you've come. I leave in a few days. We must make arrangements in case you want to keep this room."

He knew it was ridiculous for him to say that—ridiculous after the weeks that lay between them. He was frightened by the sound of his own voice. And he could not bring himself to offer his hand. Fred watched him, attempting to hide his own uneasiness.

"You needn't play the rôle of injured innocence! I know exactly what you want to say. Look here! I admit I could have come; there's no excuse—but—the fact is, there are only 'buts.' Something has happened."

"I had hoped we would make a go of it," said Dietz, "but I'm glad if you've found some one better."

Fred flushed a deep red.

"Aren't you listening? I'm sorry! And as long as you seem to know—. Yes, there is some one—a woman. It's the most wonderful thing that can happen to one! I never believed that I—that I——"

"Are you engaged?"

Again, he knew that this was a ridiculous thing to say. And again, he was amazed at how strange his voice sounded.

"Engaged—!" Fred sprang up from the old sofa and dashed to the window. He had to get his breath. When he faced Dietz he was calmer. But his eyes shone and his voice rang.

"She's getting a divorce! She must! He's a brute—her husband. You wouldn't believe it. We think, in a couple of weeks—then we'll get married—understand? Now you know. I wish you could meet her. I'm a different man. I feel as if I'd never lived before. I've only just now begun to live."

"Are your parents willing?" Nothing else popped into his head—not a thing.

"You don't seem to get it yet!" Fred laughed, cuttingly.

"Naturally, I can't say a thing before the divorce. I dare say that, even then, there will be objections; my people are very narrow-minded in those matters, like all old people."

"Naturally," said Dietz.

"But when I picture myself tied in the conventional way —to a dumb little goose. Where can you find a real woman to-day—a woman who understands, who knows that, after four years of hell, we can't stomach fol-de-rols and sweet nothings? I'm sick of the simpering, giggling Annemaries and Liselottes, who make eyes at us and turn up their noses at things they know nothing about! I want a wife who understands me, a knowing, intelligent woman. Don't you agree with me?"

"Why—yes," replied Dietz, absently.

"And quite apart from that, I must help her to get free. It's positively indecent to see her tied to a wretch like that. How did it happen that an exquisite creature like her ever fell into such hands?"

"And what are you doing now?"

"What am I *doing*? You can well imagine that we have enough to do. He's on the road most of the time; and I have to help her in matters in which she is inexperienced. It is really touching how she depends on me. And she's jealous of every one I know. Now, do you see that, with the best intentions, it wasn't possible—it's really beyond comprehension! She looks at you—with those eyes of her. And you do what she wants——"

"And on what will you—I mean, has she any money?" With an impatient wave of the hand, Fred disposed of this question.

"When we are married—she has very good connections— I'll do something. But that will all work out by itself. With

her by my side, the best in me will come out, I know. Such a woman is to be found only once in a lifetime; she's the sort that makes a real fellow out of a man. He closed his eyes, the better to sink into contemplation of her; then quickly roused himself. "You are leaving?" He did not wait for an answer. "I don't blame you. What is there in this hole? Here's hoping you'll strike something good. Let me hear from you sometimes. You understand now why I stayed away? I'm up against it, too. My parents don't suspect—in a way, that's better—but it would mean so much to me, if I could speak to them openly and receive a little encouragement. That's the least one can expect! You can't imagine what it is to hear nothing but complaints and sighs. I know my mother was hard hit when my brother was killed. She can't get over it yet; and ever since my grandfather's gone, it seems as though every cheerful word in her presence were a sin. That house is like a death-house. My father is very touchy. When I ask him how he's feeling, he gets annoyed. And my mother always has red eyes. They don't seem to suspect that I suffer under it all. But you can't expect me to sit down and lament with them. One of us has to hold up his head, you'll grant that."

He picked up his hat, smoothed it, and stared at it absently. On his wrist was a slender gold chain that Dietz had never seen before.

"Have you found the card your mother wrote to-day?"

"Saying that I should come to see them? To talk over something important? What's there to talk about? Some hard-luck story. Don't glare at me like that! You don't know how it feels to listen to them and not be able to help. That I have troubles of my own never seems to enter their heads."

"Is that what you told them?" asked Dietz. He could not bring himself to look at Fred.

"But it's the truth!" cried Fred. "I never knew that misery makes people so selfish. Don't think I'm not sorry for them. You can't imagine how it breaks me up when I see my father leaning on his stick, with nothing left of his old self. It makes me feel like screaming. But what can I do? I want to live, do you hear? After all that we've been through, we have a right to think of ourselves! We came within an inch of death a hundred times. Did we have time to give that even a thought? Forward was the command. And we were so young, and what the Fatherland expected of us was hammered into us daily! 'Do your duty!' What duty? To die gloriously? But we're alive. And you can see for yourself how our being alive galls the Fatherland. We're treated like mangy dogs, and every dirty rabble cur thinks he has the right to give us an added kick—charged to the Fatherland's account. I'm through! I want my rights. I want to know what I'm living for." He breathed with difficulty. He thrust out his hand to Dietz. "But we can still be friends."

Dietz looked at the offered hand—"I wish you luck."

Fred tossed back his head.

"Have it your own way."

He was sorry he had talked so much. He slammed the door behind him. Dietz and Pit stood listening until his footsteps died away.

"Alone again, Pit," said Dietz. But Pit did not seem much put out.

IX

It was like a siege. No matter how often Frau Lia would peek out at the street from behind the curtain, she was sure to see Fräulein von Gleichen across the way in her shabby black dress, letting her eyes wander from the house door to the balcony on the third floor and from the windows back again to the door. Every little while, the vegetable woman would also come out and look. The grudge which the latter bore went back to the day when she had been caught and fined for selling Frau Lia more butter than the rations called for. Reason enough for rancor.

"If I could only spill down something on that old maid's head," Lia muttered. "Nice thanks for all my kindness. I could scratch her eyes out, the stupid old hen!"

But she didn't scratch her eyes out, nor did she spill anything down on her. On the contrary, she avoided every appearance of being at home. For weeks she had denied that she was in, and never opened the door to Maria's insistent ringing and pounding. "She's certainly in," the shoemaker's wife had told Maria the day before, on the stairs. "Last night she quickly let in a tall young man, and they had a light in the kitchen till after midnight."

Maria listened to this and was unable to say what she wanted to say. In the middle of the landing, she had to stop to get her breath, as she put it, though it was really to listen for footsteps. "She's the biggest liar ever! She denied to my face," the woman added, "that my husband delivered her shoes to her, when he himself told me he did. And now she refuses to pay for them."

From behind the curtained window, Lia continued her watch. Had she given in a bit, it would have been wiser. She could have returned some of the things, and then have made the claim that she had nothing else. There was no record of their transactions; she had given no receipts. Who could prove anything? But something within her was against the slightest compromise. Those pieces of chased silver would add just the right touch to the boudoir she was planning, and the linens and the pretty china, and all the relics and keepsakes of ancient barons and kings were just as precious to her as they were to the Gleichen tribe. When would she be able to get hold of things like that again? She'd be nothing short of an idiot to let such a treasure slip out of her hands.

But she had never suspected that this Gleichen woman would turn out to be so obstinate. "My sisters miss the heirlooms so dear to us all. They are in your possession. For the snuff box with the picture of Frederick the Great, you gave me two pounds of bacon and ten eggs, and you promised that when I gave you back the food, you would return it. I kept a careful record of everything else you gave me and of each thing you took in pledge. You can now have back all the provisions; please let me know when, as I wish to be at home when you come!"

The little Frau had had to smile at the gentle Maria's faith. She had sent her maid to say that Fräulein von Gleichen was most regrettably mistaken. Did not Fräulein von Gleichen remember how they had always made an even exchange? And besides, Frau Waldow was greatly astonished, that Fräulein von Gleichen could have so soon forgotten how thankful she had once been when she, Frau

Waldow, had saved the Honorable Herr General from starvation.

So it had begun. And when these pleadings proved only too fruitless, Maria wrote that her sisters, as equal heirs, had their claims, too. These letters remained unanswered. Then followed Maria's threats of appealing to the district attorney, and open post-cards heaped with insults. Coolly, Lia would read these at her breakfast table. The thought of what Fred would say if he knew about these letters, always gave her a pleasant flutter. Really, this was the best part of it all: that she, once a dressmaker's helper, should now be lording it over these high-born people.

And he had no idea, that golden boy! Absolutely no idea. Only last night he had come to her in that loose-fitting overcoat, a coat she had given him because it concealed his figure so well from his aunt's prying eyes; and he had said, the moment he closed the door: "Isn't it queer that Tante Maria should be standing downstairs, as if she were keeping watch?" Lia had showed the greatest surprise. Her mouth had stood open—her eyes had stared. She had been *so* surprised.

"Why didn't you bring her with you?"

Charming, his non-plussed face.

"You're just too innocent. How can I bring Tante Maria with me, when I come to you in secret?"

"Then it wouldn't be a secret any more. Where is she?" And Lia had run to the window and, crouched behind the curtain. Yes. There, on the sidewalk had stood Maria. And with her, the vegetable woman and the newspaper-woman. How could one lower one's self to associate with creatures like that!"

"What is she waiting for?" Lia had asked, and because she

knew how annoyed Fred would be, she had twitted him: "How terrible she looks! So thin and hungry! There's nothing sadder than a poor old maid like that." And then, she had laughed her hard, thorny laugh. "Say, Fred, is she, perhaps, guarding you? Did any one tell her you come here? Maybe she wants to warn you."

He had turned a deathly white.

"Lia—please—. Don't talk that way. You know I don't like it. She has always been kind to me. And who in the world could have told her? It's out of the question. And besides, it would never enter her head that I . . . Why, only a few days ago she spoke so highly of you."

Enraptured, she had thrown herself into his arms, and had purred against him like a kitten.

"Only a few days ago? Really! How lovely! Fred—she's the nicest old thing ever." She playfully bit his ear, glad that she had remembered to perfume her hair. She knew Tante Maria did not matter now. And she had so much to tell him: her husband was staying away eight days longer, the maid had gone on a visit to the country, and the little supper-table was all set. All this had happened only last night.

But now Lia boiled with rage. The vegetable woman had just brought out a chair for Maria and another for herself, and the two allies were now at their post of observation. A telescope was all they needed. What were those women up to, anyway? Did they want to starve her out? Did they mean to waylay her on the open street—and make a scene? Just let them try it! She would scream into people's ears how these high and mighty militarists had grown fat on her, and then had refused to pay. But if Fred should find out! Cold gooseflesh ran over her. She shuddered. She had to

swallow. Her tongue felt swollen, so great was her fright. She was honestly in love with the boy. Many a time, she had told herself that, with him at her side, she could be good, she could even be religious! And what fun it was to learn things from him. To be advised by him. She could never get done looking at him—his clean-cut ways, his thoroughbred look. And what all didn't he tell her. How clever he was! She was just beginning to learn about art and such things from him. Before she knew him, she had always believed that the Victory Column, or the Post Museum, or some other of Berlin's popular sights, were the last word in beauty. True, she was now angry with herself for having been so foolish as to confess this to him. Once—it was the day they had met in the art-museum—he had talked to her, and told her about Roman Culture and Greek Art. She had not understood a word he was saying, but she had listened enraptured, because she suddenly had noticed that some people were lingering near them, straining to hear what he was saying. He had just pointed out a picture of a rider in knightly armor —an ancestor of his. And this ancestor really looked—she didn't only imagine it—like Fred.

And all the books he knew. And how careful he was to have her read the right ones. They were awfully boring—for example, Heine. But Fred said he was a great author, and she endured reading him for Fred's sake. Her husband had been dumfounded when she had held forth to him about *Atta Troll* and *Die Harzreise* and *Die Baeder von Lukka*. She remembered the titles but mixed up the rest.

"That's great," he had said, giving her an approving slap on the back, "when uncle hears of this, he'll die laughing." And tears of laughter had rolled down his cheeks.

And should she now lose Fred because of this old maid?

She ran to the mirror and saw a terror-stricken face. She attempted to smile--what a ghastly smile! She told herself that she could not live without Fred, that she must make every sacrifice to hold him. Some day, when he had his inheritance, those family things would all be his anyway. But who could tell how long his people would drag out their lives? All the same, she and Maria must come to terms.

She felt better already, and her face began to regain its natural color.

In the meantime, Fräulein von Gleichen had received some enlightenment about her former friend, and her head was buzzing with all she had heard.

"She didn't even have a shirt," declared the vegetable-woman, "only a thin dress, nothing else! The whole neighborhood knows it. And her father broke the carpet-beater on her. And the police were after her, too. And then, she found that fool of a boy, and he went and married her. You just ask her servant how she does it; ask her who gives her all that silk underwear. Her husband acts as if he knows nothing. He knows all right. And why a fine lady like you should have anything to do with such a lowdown piece of scum kept us all guessing. I'll bet you, now, you'll never get a thing back. She'd rather swear to a lie ten times over!"

Maria sat there beside the speaker, waxen and dazed. She recalled how her father had stiffly left the room when Lia came the first time. She reproached herself, bitterly. In spite of her father's instinctive repugnance, she had received Lia secretly, and had kept their friendship alive. Now she was being punished for it. This person, this disgusting baggage, had planned the swindle right from the beginning! How dared she even speak about an exchange of goods now? How often had she made the speech: "I am

only taking these on your account—and only for a little while—my husband mustn't know—for between neighbors, such things are not done." And now—how could she lie like that? And Maria's sisters, they were becoming more and more insistent; in fact, they had begun to make insulting insinuations. Her younger sister had gone so far as to openly demand the linens her departed mother had promised her.

Maria bit her lips. Her mouth became a sharp line. Her hat, with its skimpy veil of black crepe, threw a shadow on her pinched face; and her hands, in their black cotton gloves, rubbed her knees restlessly, rubbed them as though she were suffering a fever, and clasped and unclasped in despair. In spite of the fact that the Fräulein seemed to her a comical figure, the fat vegetable-woman looked at her with pity. That low-down piece of good-for-nothing across the way certainly had gotten the best of the poor thing! Funny that well born people should be so easily taken in!

But suddenly Maria stiffened. She sat up straight—transfixed——

"Here comes my nephew!"

The vegetable-woman craned her neck. Could it be possible! Her nephew! "He's the one that's always with her."

Maria stared at her. Never! That could never be. She shook her head. She could not speak.

"But I tell you it is,"—this was getting more and more interesting. "Let's stay right here! And if he goes into the house, we'll smoke him out."

His eyes lowered angrily, Fred was walking rapidly along. He was thinking of Dietz. For some days now, he had been fighting back a feeling of guilt. He had tried

desperately to put the blame on Dietz. True, Dietz had always dealt with him like a friend—shared his last mark with him. But he had failed to give his hand in farewell. "He's getting shaky—he's afraid I won't pay him back. . . . He's looking for eternal gratitude. If only I could send him dirty money . . . 'Should there be any additional items, I beg to be advised by return mail.'" He winced—a voice within him cried: "Fie! Shame!" This did not help; it made him even more bitter. He should not have gone to Dietz. He should have written—that would have been enough, but he was too decent—that was it—too decent.

He was deeply shaken. At his parents' house, where he had hurried from his talk with Dietz, he had fared no better. When his mother looked at him, he had felt like a culprit. "Why don't you come more often? Not for my sake—" Her pitiful face had spoken volumes! Her cried-out eyes had been the bitterest of accusations.

"I have so much to do, mother."

"I know," she had said, and had beckoned him to the colonel. That had given him a jolt, to see him there, like that—to come suddenly upon his father, and have the heart in him torn by the change in the old man. It must be the white pillows that gave that thin face so deathlike a hollowness. The temples were sunken, the breathing uneven and rapid. At the bedside had sat the jovial staff-physician, telling a stupid story about a horse, but later he had taken Fred aside—alone—his face now brutally serious. He would have given his life's blood for that man in there—but how could the patient be gotten off to the country? His life depended on good food and rest. It was nothing short of a miracle that he had ever summoned the strength to go to work.

"In the country, he may recover. But in the city, I'll

be frank with you, Herr von Stauffen, I don't give him four weeks."

After the doctor left, Fred had spoken, with forced casualness, to the sick man about a trip to some relatives. The colonel feebly waved his hand. "Don't bother about me. Let us arrange matters for you, my son. The Fatherland needs you. My regiment belongs to the border-defense. Never was there a Stauffen missing in time of need——"

And Fred had said yes. He had said yes to everything. Wondering only how this broken man could still take thought for the Fatherland, the Fatherland that had cast him off like a viper! That he was sacrificing his second son, too, did not enter his head. He did not ask whether this son wanted to be sacrificed—this son whose heart leaped at the thought of Lia. How could he live without her? Like a bolt from the sky something had struck into him—something stronger than duty, stronger than tradition; and while the old soldier was talking about cannons and advances, the son saw before him Lia—saw her slender, boyish body, her burning red lips, her dazzling eyes. "Kiss my foot," she purred. And he knelt before her and covered her foot with kisses——

Lia ran to him; she had heard his key in the door. Quickly, he drew her to him; his kisses smothered her. He moaned, "Oh to be near you—near you—away from everything."

It was she who understood him. It was to her alone he could bare his heart; she was the very echo of his thoughts. She knew murmuring words, soothing words. It was good to hear her condemn Dietz—Dietz to whom she had never even spoken. She knew enough, though, to call him a heartless thing. And Fred's parents? They put her in a

frenzy. "Have you no rights at all? First, they pack you off to war, as if that were nothing. And now, your mother can't bear the sight of you because you still know how to laugh, because you want to live. Any one can see you're not her favorite. She would rather have kept the other one. Oh, you poor, poor thing! Thank God, you have me."

Yes, that was good. Her sympathy was like music. She agreed with him on everything. She shared his indignations, his hurts. She said: "But all the same, your father must get to the country."

"Of course," said Fred, feeling a vise clamp his breast.

The doorbell rang. Shrill. Persistent. With a gasp of terror, Lia sprang up from Fred's knee and laid a finger on his lips. She hoarsely whispered, "Don't speak! For God's sake, don't speak. It's my husband." But she knew it was Maria.

"It can't be, he has his key!"

"No—you have it."

They listened. Fred said firmly, "When he comes in, I will tell him everything."

Lia clapped her hand on his mouth; she was icy-cold.

"Sh—for God's sake."

He did not understand. He pushed her aside.

"Lia! I must. He will challenge me—that's certain—but *you* must leave the house."

In spite of her terrific fear, her eyes flashed with an unbelieving joy.

"A duel? For me? Oh, you sweet boy!"

That would be in the papers. Her name would be in print. Everybody would talk about her. And Lia, on whose account men shot each other, would mean something altogether different from the little wife of a traveling

salesman. She felt herself expand in value. Perhaps now, after such a sensation, her husband's uncle would make her his chief heir; but when Fred rose to his feet, she threw herself upon him.

"If you love me, Fred, don't—don't! You don't know him; he's terrible. God! that bell! The whole house will be on top of us. Please! Please! For God's sake—you mustn't!" She stood with her back against the door, and Fred looked into her terror-stricken face.

"That's cowardly," he said, managing to keep his voice down.

"No, no," her teeth chattered. She really was fighting for him now. She knew that if Maria were to find him there, she would tell him everything. He would be lost to her. For, in spite of his love for her, she knew too well, from things he had once said, what he expected from the woman who was to bear his name.

How those crazy women tore at the bell. How their fists pounded the door. It was a wonder the house did not come down. Thank God that Fred, when he came, had remembered to bolt the door. But if they should start to scream, and he should hear Maria's voice——!

"As your future husband, I have the right," his breath came hot. "I could never face him, if I dodged him now. He must suspect, or he wouldn't keep it up. Let me—Lia——"

She saw his determination. It was time she played her trump-card.

He saw her head droop to one side, her face become blue, her hands clutch the air. He was terrified.

He caught her in his arms, carried her, crumpled and

lifeless, to the couch, tore her blouse open, and listened to her heart.

"Dearest—my own—I'm with you."

Luckily, he knew where to find the cognac. He rubbed her over the heart; he breathed on her cold hands—aware that never in his life had he known such fear. What was the terror of death underseas compared to this?

He called her by every endearing name, rubbed her pulse, smoothed her forehead, and breathed his warm breath into her. He was unaware that the noise outside had stopped. Why should he concern himself with the man at the door? Everything that Lia had said about the latter was now borne out. How could the fellow have disgraced her like that before the neighbors? Hadn't Lia told him, a few days ago, that her husband even beat her. Fear of his blows must have made her swoon.

He knelt beside her. He poured out upon her his pity, his tenderness. He was ready to do anything for her. By all means, a divorce—and the sooner the better. She could get it over with while he was on border-duty. But she must leave this house. She was no longer safe here. For the time being, he need say nothing to his parents. A divorced woman would not be very acceptable to them. Besides, his father's condition called for secrecy. Lia would see that, too. But later on—after his father had gained back his strength in the country——

In the country——?

Helplessly, he hung over Lia. He watched for the first flutter of her eyelids. For her own sake, as well as for his, she must know everything. From the very first day, there must be no secrets between them. Only a few weeks ago, he had actually believed that a sensible way out of his

money troubles would be for him to marry into a wealthy family. Undoubtedly, his mother was now counting on the same thing. But now, he knew that he could never sell himself.

"Fred," murmured Lia—"Fred, dear."

Tears of joy sprang to his eyes—his suspense had been so overpowering. And he trembled, and had to get a grip on himself. He pillowed his head on her breast; he lay motionless, with closed eyes. Lia did not stir. She was now at peace; the ringing had stopped; the storm was over. A faint smile played about her lips. How alike all men were! This was exactly the way her husband always lay beside her, whenever she had brought on one of her attacks. This was the way the old uncle crooned and, in his fright, promised her the skies. What was this hysteria anyway? A doctor had once told her, it was something that ought to be beaten out of women. And her mother once had struck her over the ears with a wet towel, until she screamed for mercy. But what else, beside her little spell, had a helpless woman to resort to, when she wanted to accomplish something? Her husband never snatched up a wet towel; he let her have her way. Nor had her old friend beaten her; at the most he had given her a piece of jewelry the next day, or whatever it was she happened to want. Hysteria was a wonderful thing.

It turned out to be an enchanting evening. Lia was not permitted to budge from her place. She must only let herself be taken care of. Fred prepared the tea, brought her bread and butter and cold sliced ham, placed the little table near her, and set it so prettily that it seemed as though he had been setting tables always. She watched him with amusement. They are too funny—these foolish men, when

they're in love. If it's for the woman they love, they learn everything, and nothing is too much for them to do. He would certainly have made less of a fuss over Tante Maria. And Lia laughed softly.

"Darling, what makes you laugh?" He put a bit of sardine in her mouth, and made her sip a glass of port wine.

"I was just thinking how clumsy you are, Fred," and she drew his head down toward her.

But he did not kiss her. He merely caressed her hand.

"I mustn't stay any longer."

"What. Not stay? Why not?"

"You need a good rest, Lia. And if I stay——?"

"You must stay. Fred—don't go," and she dug her knuckles into her eyes and, like a petulant child, flung herself on her side. "I don't want to stay alone—I'm afraid."

"But dearest, listen."

"No, I don't want to listen," she sobbed. "I am boring you. Just because I took sick, I'm boring you."

He reasoned with her. "You know better than that. You know it's torture for me to be away from you. But let me go. On account of your husband. He will come back. Then you will have to open the door. He must not find me here. It would all come out in court. Don't you see? You don't know how hard it is for me to go. But our future depends on it."

He said a good deal more. She did not stir. She let him believe he had convinced her. But when he went to get his cigarettes, she slipped out, drew the key from the lock, and hid it. She perched herself on his knee. Again, he was powerless.

The next morning, at the breakfast table, he told her about his father. He told her about his own anxiety and his mother's fears, about the loss of their wealth, and about the ridiculous pension.

"But you people have such gorgeous antiques," said Lia, "why doesn't your mother sell them?"

He looked at her: "*Sell* them?"

"If you can save a life——"

She edged closer to him. She already saw herself arranging the rosewood furniture in her sitting room, hanging up the pictures in their oval gold frames, pictures she could later point to as her ancestors. She was already counting the silver.

"It's only a suggestion," said she, her cheeks glowing with a red spot. "I happen to know some one who can help with the sale."

She saw how he suffered, and she became all sympathy. And when he was about to go, she even wept.

"I'll try to get some money for you, Fred. Your parents will be my parents, too, isn't that so? Oh, when I think of myself becoming that wonderful man's daughter," she exulted. "Am I, after all, really going to have a father and a mother? I have always thought—what a holy thing——"

Oughtn't he kneel before her? Wasn't she a little saint?

Lia, at the window, gazed after him until he was lost from view. She was melting with love for him. She read her husband's letter, and laughed over the longing it betrayed. She bathed herself, rummaged awhile among her silken underthings, and at last chose violet. She telephoned to the old uncle.

"Am I disturbing you?"

She heard a cackling laugh.

"Does the little minx let me hear from her?"

"But Uncle darling——"

"Come along, come——"

"And you won't scold me?"

"Take a taxi, child—come."

How lucky! The ill-humored old aunt, who had never yet failed to show her aversion for Lia, was out. Fräulein Klitzinger, the housekeeper, told Lia so, spitefully, and wanted to close the door in the visitor's face. But Lia quickly stuck her foot in the opening, and asked for her uncle.

"He's down at the exchange," said the woman, who evidently had her instructions.

"That's too bad." shrieked Lia, "my husband gave me such an important message for him."

"Is that you, child?" came a wheezy voice; and there stood the old uncle in a red silk dressing gown, a faultless picture of a man of the world, a man who can still see in woman the wonder of creation. He was flawlessly shaven, and smelled of Russian leather and Henry Clay cigars, the frailty of his seventy-five years skillfully hidden behind his gallantry. In spite of his tottering legs, in spite of his fatherly greeting, Fräulein Klitzinger knew that the old man's joy at the moment was anything but paternal. He saw the housekeeper's rage and disgust, and with a knavish smile wagged his head at her, then extravagantly kissed Lia's hand.

"She wanted to send me away, Uncle, because she thought you were at the exchange," she laughed over her shoulder, mocking the housekeeper. "As if relations didn't feel it in their bones when they should come."

"You little devil," chuckled the old man. After closing the doors and drawing the heavy portières, he kissed her with a drooling mouth. He listened to her story, though

he did not believe a word she said. She told him how she had longed for him. How she had not dared to come because she was afraid of her aunt. During the whole recital, his shaking hand was fondling her. She lay back on a couch spread with panther skins, which she knew set off her violet stockings stunningly. She let him kiss her and pet her and listened to his asthmatic breathing with the one thought, "If only he doesn't get a heart attack."

Though he could see right through her, he was entranced. "You little piece of depravity, you—" he stammered. "You bit of sin." She must have had a sweet poison in her that poured fire into his veins, that whipped up his senses and made him forget his years. How adorable her impudence was!

Who could ever guess what lay behind those childlike eyes of hers? "Where did you get your roguishness?" he asked. She smiled her maidenly smile and piously folded her hands: "Isn't love the best teacher?"

But when she knew she had stayed long enough, she reached for his hand and kissed it. He snickered—and quickly composed himself.

"And now—the reason for your coming?"

She told him a long story about the misfortunes of her very dear friends. "You know Colonel von Stauffen and his family—" The Colonel certainly would have had a stroke, had he overheard how she described him; how she made of Fred, her magnificent boy, in whose arms she loved to rock herself, a broken-down consumptive: "Shot in the lungs, one foot in the grave. And the mother—! Good heavens! Only the other day she tried to hang herself, but luckily they cut the rope in time!" Lia had sat at the bedside of the poor woman all night, and had given her

word that she would look after the poor son and the poor husband, who was doomed to limp through life on a wooden leg. "And I know, uncle, what a kind heart you have, and that you will back me up in my promises."

"Since when, my child, are you so soft-hearted?" There he sat, in the tall-carved chair, its wine-red velour a flattering background for his handsome, white-wigged head. In his hand he held an imported cigar. His knees were crossed. He liked to display his narrow feet, snug in their red, Russian-leather slippers and gray silk socks.

"And what's more, they're blue-bloods," she gushed, heedless of his question.

"What advantage will *you* get out of it?" asked he. The dryness of his voice made her uneasy.

"Advantage! Out of those poor creatures!"

Charming, her indignation! What a hurt expression the little minx could put on! She could even weep real tears, if she had to. He enjoyed her art, with the manner of a Maecenas, a connoisseur——

"I mean, my child," and he seemed to be contemplating the white ashes of his cigar, though he never took his eye from her, "if it is in any way to your interest——"

This she passionately denied.

"And the young man, the consumptive, don't you like him a little?"

She was deeply wounded.

"If you could only *see* him uncle: he's all skin and bones! You'd wonder how he can still get about."

"Von Stauffen, did you say?"

"Yes; and very respectable people, too!"

"If you say so, child—" He narrowed his eyes, licked his dry lips, and coughed to cover his laughter, his frank

laughter at her madonna-like eyes. The little vixen did not even blush.

"If you could only see him, uncle——"

"The consumptive?"

"Yes. It would break your heart. My God, such wretched people!"

His eyes were actually beaming on her. He slowly bent toward her.

"Then it was some one else who was with you last night? You know, child, my deep concern for you when your husband is away gives me no rest. In the fear that something might happen to you, I have arranged to have you watched—the times are so unsettled, aren't they? Therefore I was relieved to learn that you were in good hands. Fräulein Klitzinger happens to know the Stauffens. Yes, yes, very pathetic! And how nice that you are looking out for them—I must tell your aunt, she always says you are heartless."

Lia slowly straightened up. The old fox! Fooled her into his trap, did he? So he knew everything, while she was spinning him a yarn! For a moment, she considered whether she ought to play the rôle of hurt innocence. But as she encountered the look in the old man's eyes—those misty eyes of his—and saw the pursed lips quivering with repressed laughter, her amazement fled, and her healthy brazenness won out. She threw herself back once more on the panther skins, and laughed a loud, hearty laugh. There was nothing left to save. Why should she take the chance?

Now, she must go, leave at once. The dressmaker was waiting. She had promised to meet her. She stood before the mirror and patted her hair into place, provoked with

herself at seeing her flushed cheeks. What a sacrifice she was making for Fred! For his sake alone, she had brought herself to this. It meant good-by to the old man. She tied her veil and managed to glance at him. He still sat there, watching her in the glass. He seemed to be weighing something in his mind. It must be the nonsense with which she had tried to fool him. And that Klitzinger person! What right had she to talk about the Stauffens. The old cat evidently grudged her the friendship. Or was it possible that Maria——?

Panic seized her. Maria—if she knew of her visits to this house——

"But why shouldn't you help them, child?" said the old gentleman, as if he had at last come to a decision. "In fact, I want you to help them. There's something fine about a kind heart, especially in a creature like you. When you came to me the first time, Lia, I asked you for a kiss. You wanted a good position for your husband, but you said, "I'm not to be bought." It seems that I was the one who was bought, because the boy got the job. In that sense, child, you are the only woman in Berlin who cannot be bought."

She tossed her head. If it was all over between them now, at least, she did not have to listen to his silly blather.

"You have been tricking me right along."

"No, child, I have not. I have always paid you honestly. In fact, I have given in to all your entreaties, besides."

"My entreaties?"

"Even to making you an heiress of mine. But since your aunt has her lawful claims——"

"The old——"

"A good soul, with rights of her own. No, Lia, that

much you couldn't expect. But you ought to help your friends."

She angrily snatched up her silver purse, and looked for her gloves, which had fallen under the table.

"That's why I will let you have what I had set aside for you—now—while I'm still alive. So that I can have something out of it too."

"What—?" He wanted to— He was not through with her. She felt a cold shiver run through her. Leaving something to her! How much? God—how slow old people are! She knelt motionless. He walked with slow deliberate step to his desk, and took his check book. Lia held her breath. She listened to the scratching of his pen.

He opened a strong-box. Well she knew that box! The jewelry it hid! Some of it she already possessed. "Little reminders," he had called them, and her husband had had them appraised. Perhaps the ring—the emerald ring—or the diamond pin with the sapphires. No, that would be too much. He was too stingy for that. But what then? Her eyes almost popped out of her head. Her throat grew dry; it felt scorched. . . . What!—the pearls! She almost screamed. Slowly he trickled the string through his fingers —and smiling, slowly shook his head.

"The one who wore these," he said, "was like you. I bought them from her estate. She was a clever little trick, the ruin of many a chap."

She did not hear what he said. She saw only the pearls, while her thoughts remained on the check. How much was it? How much?

When she saw the amount, she let out a shriek, and threw herself on her knees before the old man, as if he were God. She kissed his hands, called him by every

adoring name, swore that she had never loved any one as she loved him.

"Yes, yes, child," said he. Many a grateful girl must have said things like that to him. But from none other, perhaps, had he derived so much pleasure.

"See? Now you can help your friends, can't you? And when you come the next time, you will not have to worry about them. I'll have you all to myself, yes, Lia?"

She hailed a taxicab. She must cash the check right away. One never could tell—the old man or his wife might stop it. To the jeweler. Then home. She almost fainted. Instead of poor little Lia, there was now a rich Lia! She could buy herself a villa. No more living three flights up! And her husband's family had better dance to her music now. She had put up with them long enough. From now on, *she* would have the upper hand!!

Fred learned nothing of her luck. After she had done a little figuring, she found that she could not spare any of it, if she was to use it sensibly. And besides, why should she, all of a sudden, become a soft-hearted fool? With all his love for her—what had he ever given her? Yes—a lot of pretty talk about the future. And now that she was a somebody, should she support his shabby family, in the bargain?

"You are so quiet to-day," said Fred.

She moved closer to him.

"Sometimes, just the thought of you takes my breath away."

"Oh Lia—to be near you——"

With complete abandon, she kissed him. She thought: "When I have my villa, he must come often! He will have a special room for himself."

"I talked to mother—about selling some of her furniture——"

Lia was overjoyed. How could she contain herself?

"She will find it very hard," Fred continued. "I think I had better take over the sale, while they are out of town, and get an advance from some dealer."

That was a brilliant idea.

"I'll help you Fred—in every way—and if worst comes to worst, I can pawn my rings and make the payment myself."

"My sweet," said he, "my only—" He was carried away with gratitude. And she kept overwhelming him with her endearments. His senses deserted him, locked there in her arms. "After all," thought Lia, as she kissed him, "He's the one I can thank for my having turned out to be so rich and so refined."

X

"Mellen" was a considerable estate. Acquired by the present owner as a bit of speculation, about five years before the war, it yielded big returns now. The former landlord, Herr von Eynem, was so old-fashioned that he had let the timber remain timber and the fallow land lie fallow. His laborers, had they lived to be a hundred, would have continued to receive free housing and keep, while from year to year the pasture-land for their geese would have grown wider and wider. Whenever Herr von Eynem and his family arrived at the estate to spend the summer, the villagers for miles around were sure to gather for the welcome. The children would sing a hymn of praise. The quaint old-fashioned flowers from the little front gardens, picked clean for the occasion, would either be strewn by little girls at the feet of the Gnädige Frau, or else woven into wreaths and garlands and hung on the gate-posts and doors. From all the countryside would come old friends in carriages which their fathers and grandfathers had used, to picnic under the plane-trees and the oaks, carved with the initials and hearts-entwined of their forebears. With laughter and gay talk, they would seek out their beloved nooks and exchange reminiscences, hoping that their grandchildren would live to remember how happy life once had been on this spot.

"But," the overseer had concluded, "at this rate, the place will be nothing but a pleasure-resort."

The day had come when this kindly landlord sold the estate. He had been forced to sell because he could not meet

the mortgages; the creditors had seized even the cattle in the stalls. The laborers had wept, and the overseer had wept. On the next day, however, this same overseer had gone somewhere into the Oldenburg region and had bought himself a piece of land which he, too, hoped would some day prove to be—for his children and grandchildren—a useless pleasure-resort. In the course of time he had sued the new owner of "Mellen" for his unpaid commission.

This new owner, Herr Tissmer, had not been bound by sentiments of piety or tradition. He had suffered no pangs when plane-trees and oaks were cut down, when vine-clad arbors and trysting-places vanished. Though he put no stock in the songs of the villagers, he had more than made up for this by his vigorous concern over goose-pastures. Also, he had lost no time in singling out the men who were too old to work, and had got rid of them promptly. Old friends and neighbors of Herr von Eynem no longer came to festivals. In their stead, came countless wagons of saltpeter and manure. And only a few years after the purchase, Herr Tissmer had been offered twice what he had paid for the estate. He could well thank the shrewdness of his big blonde wife for his having refused the offer. For soon came blessings, and the war poured out upon "Mellen" its horn of plenty. Herr Tissmer, like a true patriot, had enlisted in the service of his country, had received the command of an internment-camp, and in the course of time, had gained over fifty pounds in weight. His sons, too, had marched away to fight, and neither trunks nor chests could have held their booty—though no one ever spoke of that. For "work and hold your tongue" was the motto of this family. Throughout the war, Frau Tissmer had discreetly managed, with the help of a dear relation, a thorough-going ras-

cal of an overseer, to find loopholes in the countless regulations of the food-board. It was really to Frau Tissmer's credit that splendid Belgian horses, Danish cows and steers, Polish sheep, and swine of mixed nationalities now filled the barns.

It was only with the workers had they had trouble. After the revolution, there had been no putting up with them. It was then that Herr Tissmer had crouched for three days under a mound of oats in a bin, while the laborers lay in ambush for the Tissmer Sons. Hungry, gaunt-eyed women, too, their bones sucked dry by the war, had stood with cudgels, on the watch for the Tissmers, Madame Tissmer included.

In cautious whispers the Pastor had told his wide-eyed listeners about the terrorism of 1848, and the county sheriff had kept frantically telephoning to "Mellen" that there were no policemen to be had. The sheriff evidently had already received his pummelling.

After that, the volunteer police had come. But just at sowing time, the farm women had discovered that they could not work for eighty pfennigs a day, and the men awoke to the fact that they could not live on their pay. Common servants had begun to talk back to their masters, and even the cattlemen had become impudent.

Then the Fatherland had taken a hand.

The soil must be tilled, the Fatherland had proclaimed, the people must have bread. Volunteers had come forth. If the wage-earners and farm-hands had forgotten their duty—others must remember theirs. Show them that the German spirit of self-sacrifice was still alive. And the poor needy farmers had sent in their addresses to be posted up in schools, universities, banks, and the headquarters of patriotic societies. "Free board and a sack of peas for field-

guards." "Full keep without pay for friends of the soil." "Agency for volunteers, terms subject to agreement." "Officers! Become expert farmers."

And impoverished officers, thrown out of their professions by the thousands, had answered these alluring calls. Bureaus had been organized to supply cheap hands in return for a good-sized fee. In the towns along the coast, ship captains in droves had sought these jobs that held out nothing beyond the maintenance of their naked bodies, with the proviso: "Until conditions improve——"

With many misgivings Frau Tissmer was awaiting the arrival of three new men.

"They're the kind that think we're running a free health-resort," said she. "Three lieutenants! Why don't they send us regular men, who are used to work? What'll I do with an aviator? What are their fancy war records to me? Am I here to feed the Navy? You didn't have to write to Berlin for such specimens as these."

It relieved her feelings to be able to speak her mind so freely to those at the breakfast-table. With lowered eyes, the three student farmerettes—girls from a nearby college—sat silent: the overseer, chewing his big mouthfuls, listened unconcernedly; the two sons acted as if they did not hear; and Susanna, the daughter of the house, sat like a waxen saint. In front of her, on a long board, lay a short sausage. Everybody was given one thin slice, and no one dared ask for a second. The eyes of the daughter of the house would have frozen the words on the bold interloper's lips.

"The young fellows are strong and healthy," said Herr Tissmer making an unusual noise with his barley soup. It was burned this morning, but one had to set an example to the young people.

"Do they know they are to sleep in the servant's quarters?" asked the wife, not in the least silenced.

"They know what they're hired for!"

"They do, do they? And when they've been here eight days, they'll be lording it over us."

"I'll be here to be reckoned with!" said Herr Tissmer, with ominous calm.

But she was not to be appeased. At five o'clock that morning, the girls had already heard her scolding. They knew what that meant. These girls had taken the places of three servants who had been discharged, and the "family life" which lured them to the farm, consisted of these assemblies at meal-time.

"Tell them at the outset, overseer, that they will be treated strictly as servants. Visits to the main house will be forbidden. We are not looking for company. We want the work done. That must be understood, right from the start. And if they wish to burn a light after ten o'clock, they must pay for it themselves. Their meals they will take with the rest of the help.

"No," said her husband. "I have arranged for them to eat in their own quarters."

She said no more. She rose to her feet like an offended queen, and the tutor, a hungry-looking, narrow-chested seminary student, who, in spite of everything, still clung to a few ideals, cringed as she banged the door behind her.

The three lieutenants were coming with the milk-wagon. That is, the milk-wagon was bringing their trunks, while they briskly followed afoot. Pit, of course, was the most spirited of the party. How happy he was! How he barked! He chased the birds, snapped at the butterflies, and had a

lively encounter with a black tomcat, sunning himself in front of the inn on the Landstrasse.

"The master will not stand for that!" chuckled the milk-boy.

"Why didn't we do this right at the start?" asked Dietz. "Why in the world did we stay in the city? The country is the only place——"

The others agreed. They felt as if released from a prison, where hope alone had given them the strength to hold out. One of them, Karl Wendheim, was deeply in sympathy with Tolstoi and Gorki—that is, in theory. And the other had a stepsister who lived in a villa in Baden-Baden. She must be on a journey now, otherwise she would have answered his begging letters. Unfortunately he was a pessimist and had forebodings, while his companions glowed with happy expectation.

"It's beyond me, Reuter, how you can sing that way," said Wendheim. "You must be crazy."

Dietz did not hear. The wagon-wheels crunched, the old nag wheezed,—it was an up-hill road,—and a little way off, a mill-wheel clattered. Dietz followed Pit with his eyes, watched him chase a crow, and sang out with gusto;

"Der Hund, der hat vier Beine,
An jeder Ecke eine—
Und hinten einen Schwantz—
Sonst ist der Hund nicht ganz!"

He breathed the clover-sweetened air. With each little breeze, he felt a fresh gladness. Every bridge had been burned behind him. Forward, was the order of the day. The clean, blue sky laughed down on him. The fields, stretched out in happy abandon, throbbed with the warming sun. Wasn't

that a good omen? But just as he was about to take the others into his confidence on this point, Herbert Winkler, the pessimist, let out an oath. A hag of an old woman had planted herself right in front of them, and was yelling something to the milkboy.

"Are those the new fellers?"

"Yeh," answered the boy.

Her steely eyes peered out from deep hollows, and from under the ragged shawl on her head, her gray hair hung down in dirty strands. She wore a short thick skirt, and her feet were crammed into huge felt shoes. She leaned on a pitchfork and blew her nose into her sackcloth apron.

"If you believe in omens," said Herbert Winkler, halting abruptly, "Take a look!"

"Good day," piped the woman.

Dietz alone answered the greeting, while Pit retreated to a safe distance. There was something about that pitchfork . . .

The milk boy strode to a milestone. "Here's where Mellen begins; in twenty minutes we'll be there," he said pointing with the handle of his whip to a large, red-roofed farmhouse in the distance.

They stood there, gazing happily. The horse-chestnuts and lindens looked like faithful sentinels, and the main house was proud and stately.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" shouted Dietz throwing his cap in the air.

Herbert Winkler continued to look angrily at the old woman.

"Just our luck to have *her* bob up!" he said, turning to the milkboy. He then inquired how old the nag was, and whether she always jogged at this pace. Were there any

ladies on the farm? And the hens—were they good layers?

The last aroused the boy's suspicion.

"Nothing to brag about," was the reply, "And anyway, the master's wife keeps count!"

The overseer met the new men on the driveway. "Just by accident," he said, and he greeted each with a handshake. He seemed taken aback by their correct military bearing. At the outbreak of the war, before he had contrived to get his bogus discharge for disability, he had served as a petty officer. He could not help feeling a kinship with these boys. His eyes, in spite of their cunning, had a friendly warmth in them, as they read the self denial and hunger in those narrow faces. He liked the way they stood before him, so respectful, so humble. It did look as if they knew what they had been hired for.

"And the dog?" he asked.

"He is mine," said Dietz. "May I keep him?"

The overseer raised his eyebrows, but said nothing more. The three sensed his uneasiness, sensed what it must mean for him to treat as underlings men who only a short time before were his superiors—men of such spotless family name, as only the navy—the late pride of Germany—could boast. Dietz appointed himself spokesman: "Herr Inspektor—we beg of you to look upon us as hired men—nothing else. You need hands. That's why we are here. At the start, we may slip up now and then—that's to be expected. Why, once, when I was a beginner, I smashed an airplane into splinters. But we mean well, Herr Inspektor. The confidence you place in us will be repaid."

They reached the yard.

At the living room window, the inspector saw, bending over some needlework, a blonde head and a dark head.

That was the mother and the daughter. He knew perfectly well that they both had seen the strangers long ago. A chicken could not pass that window unseen by them. But now, they did not even lift their eyes—so indifferent were they to the new arrivals. And by the wagon-shed stood the master, his crook-stick hanging from his arm. He wore yellow leggings, and his open jacket showed an expanse of black velvet vest. He was almost in holiday splendor! The Gnädige Frau had seen to that. The newcomers must not mistake *her* husband for a farm-hand. Beside him stood the sheep-dog Tell, too haughty to notice the tail-wagging advances of Pit. The master, too, knew that the new hands had arrived. The barns and sheds had long ago echoed the creaking wheels of the milkwagon. He strode toward the fields without so much as turning his head.

"Is that Herr Tissmer?" asked Herbert Winkler.

"Yes," said the overseer.

"Shall we report to him now?"

"No. Wait until he sends for you."

"And the Gnädige Frau? Shouldn't we present ourselves to her?" He felt ashamed. He had already forgotten.

"No," replied the overseer, looking the other way, "she has nothing to do with the help."

Against the main house leaned a long row of workhouses. "There's my room," said the overseer, pointing his stick at two windows behind which could be seen a large business-like desk. "And where the milkboy is unloading, is your door."

This door stood above some well-worn brick steps. The boy set down the trunks and white-lettered boxes before the door, and with his groaning wagon lazily rode off. Pit jumped on his master's leather bag, squatted there, bared

his teeth to the inspector, and quivered with hope and excitement.

A cloud of smells greeted them. Mamsell was cooking turnips with pork-rind; in an open shed, one of the girls was mixing a brew for the young pigs. The air was dank and moist as it rose from the potato cellar, where a second college girl was removing the sprouts from potatoes. The third, in the laundry shed, was boiling soap. She was the one her employers called an impudent hussy. Didn't she laugh when anything struck her funny and sing when she felt happy? And worse yet, didn't she eat when she was hungry? Her father, a school director, was even now carrying on a lively correspondence with Frau Tissmer. The young lady had already been informed that she was getting enough to eat; anyway, the cooking in the country was never what it was in the city, and the boxes of food her father intended to send her were entirely superfluous.

"I couldn't be afraid of her," said the girl to her friends, who were in the same plight. "You should have seen the Tartar I had over me in the dormitory at Weimar."

Near the steps stood a line of big and little wooden shoes. All at once the air was rent with the high-pitched sing-song of children in recitation:

"Wenn-ich-dies-Wun-der-fas-sen-will-
Dann-steht-mein-Herz-vor-Ehr-furcht-still"

"That's the school," said the overseer. "Our boss is a patron of learning and the church!"

Right next to the potato cellar was the school. In semi-darkness. And on the other side of the cellar stood the servants' shack. The newcomers looked in.

"There's a bed and a cupboard for everybody," said the

overseer; "when you've put your things away, come over to me."

He left them. They felt his embarrassment.

The floor of the shack, like the steps, was of worn-down red brick. The walls, tinted pink, had large moist blotches. Iron beds with red-checked pillows and feather quilts and thick sheets of gray homespun—in a row like a hospital ward. At the right, an iron washstand with a rusty tin pitcher and basin. In the middle of the room, a table and three wooden stools; and on the remaining wall three, narrow, doorless cupboards, empty and forsaken.

Dietz took off his coat and hung it on a nail near the stove. "First let's stow everything away."

Karl Wendheim promptly began to unpack. But he suddenly straightened up—placed his hands on his hips, cocked his head to one side, studied the floor, and proceeded to tell Herbert Winkler something he had just happened to recall.

"On my first command on the *Hessen*, it looked bad, too. Why, right in the channel—on the second day out—a terrific sea—my bunk on the heeling side—the last bit in my stomach thrown up—with one of the men purposely talking about a slab of bacon hanging on a string. Every wave that hit the deck seemed to break right over my head. I thought it was my finish. But here I am——"

The last trunk was carried in.

"I knew as much," said the pessimist, and he recalled the old hag at the crossroads, as he surveyed the cheerless room.

But all at once, the room seemed flooded with sunshine. A girl's happy voice was singing to them,—it must have been to them.

"Grüss Euch Gott, alle miteinander."

It came from the washhouse, and they stretched their necks out of the window to see. But all they saw was a blonde head wound round with braids. And as they washed and combed and brushed themselves, that song kept coming to them: *"Grüss Euch Gott——"*

The overseer received them at his door.

"I will talk to you about the work later. But first—I happened to get a package to-day." Ham and sausage and real bread and butter. There were four little boards lying on the table and beside each a knife.

"Help yourselves," said the man, and they felt as if they were again on board, where everything that one man owned belonged to the rest. "It must be pretty bad in the city."

To eat one's fill; not to count the grams of butter; not to count each mouthful of bread; to bite into that meat; to know again what good teeth were meant for; to really eat until you had enough. Pit got the ends and crusts. They were big chunks, too. And no one spoke. The officers didn't, because they wanted to eat—only to eat; and the overseer didn't, for the reason that he hadn't the heart to interrupt them.

That was the queerest part of it. Everybody knew him to be sly and tricky; and any one who had any dealings with him had to be on the lookout. His pay was only 1800 marks a year, but his connections in Denmark generously made it up to him. Some people said they could not tell who was the bigger scoundrel, the owner or his overseer.

As the young men ate, he drew the yellow curtain across the window.

A heavy fist banged the door.

"Dinner is ready." That was Mamsell.

In a little while, a voice came through the keyhole,

muffled and timid: "Herr Inspektor, please tell the gentlemen I put something for them on the stove, I just received a package."

Strange that she, too, had just happened to receive a package. That was the girl with the braids.

At three o'clock, Herr Tissmer sent for the new men. They were to bring their papers. At five minutes past three, they were back in their quarters.

Herbert Winkler said: "Let's pack up."

Karl Wendheim said: "He didn't even offer his hand."

Dietz said: "If he shoots Pit, I'll strangle him."

For Herr Tissmer had wound up the interview by remarking that he would not put up with strange dogs on his place, and that he would put a bullet into the cur without mercy, if he caught him poaching.

"Die Vöglein im Walde, die singen so wunder—wunderschön—
In der Heimat, in der Heimat, da gibts ein Wiederseh'n!"

Again it was the golden haired girl. Her steps drew near the door. She knocked. All three sprang up to open it for her.

She remained standing in the doorway, holding before her a large bunch of field-flowers. She blushed, her eyes moist and glistening.

"The other girls and I—just a welcome—and my brother was a navy man, too. But at Skaggerak—perhaps you knew him—And it's not very nice here. But if—after hours—we girls can be of any help to you——"

Could they! They kissed her firm brown hands, each in turn; but not one could utter a word. When they at

last had found their tongues, she was gone, and Dietz stood with the flowers in his hand, staring at the ugly, plastered oven. Winkler stupidly groped for something under the table, while Wendheim tried to make out his reflection in a smudged piece of looking-glass which the last man must have forgotten.

"Gentlemen—I remain," cried Dietz. He could not get into his overalls quickly enough. He was ready for anything. And the other two came to the prompt decision that they had a gentleman's agreement to fulfill, and even if it did mean endless cleaning of barns, wheeling of dung, combing of horses, or sweeping of yards, they'd do it gladly and with a song. For two marks a day. And for turnips and pork-rind.

A few days later Frau Tissmer said to her daughter:

"It looks to me as if the hens are not laying so good, since those three came!"

Susanna was just then engaged in carefully scraping off half the lard from the slices of bread that Mamsell had spread for the men and in rearranging the sausage so that she was able to put back one slice out of every six. The matter of the eggs she herself had noticed already, and she was on the lookout. With the overseer and the three girls caring for the hens, you couldn't make much headway.

"Those fellows look to me as if they're getting fatter, already," said Frau Tissmer.

"So they are," said Susanna.

She opened a box of fine white bread, locked the door of the pantry, laid one end of the large table for herself and her mother, put a dainty bit of venison in aspic on the plates, and set out the glasses and the port wine; Frau Tissmer watched her earnestly.

"Don't you think that we ought to set a trap in front of the smoke-house?"

"It's attended to, mama. Karl and Fritz are doing it."

Just like them. You could depend on *those* sons.

"But the milk——?"

Yes, the milk was something else. With eighty cows, it was really impossible to know whether or not a few quarts were missing. When city folks came around, folks who looked at the rich milk with great hopes,—and even at the cream itself, it was time to take a hand in the matter. These simple-minded people, whose stomachs through the hunger-years of the war had become weak and incapable of digesting rich food, looked for wonders from milk drinking. It was then that Susanna, with a smile, would invite a hopeful into the dairy house, where she had just ladled into the churn the heavy yellow cream. "Will you have a glass?" Good God! What a question! Could a person be blamed for snatching at a drink like that, once in his life? Think of it! Cream! Yellow and buttery and sweet! And the victim would drink.

"It's years since I had anything so delicious."

"Wait," says Susanna, kindly, "we'll feed you up!" But at the table that very night, the unfortunate would ask to be excused. He would think he had dysentery. And the doctor would forbid him to eat butter or fats of any kind for fourteen days. However, the three lieutenants gave no sign of dysentery. One could not deny that. And even Mamsell didn't notice anything.

"And their shameful goings on——"

For these three did not live up to the family maxim, "Work and hold your tongue." That very morning, as Frau Tissmer, in her bed-jacket and without her braids,

stood behind the window-curtain, and looking out to see that everybody went promptly to work, at the merciless call of the early bell, Dietz, while yoking the oxen, had lost no time in starting up his song:

"Sie war nicht schön von Angesicht,
Und 'nen Buckel hat das Luder, der Gefällt mir nicht."

And from the pigpen came something like an answer.

"Das war die böse Schwiegerma—ma—ma."

At the same time, the pessimist, wheeling straw into the barn, was warbling a ballad of unrequited love:

"Das zog der Soldat ein Messer,
Das Messer war blutig rot,
Das stüss er dem Mädel in Herze."

"Disgusting!" shuddered Frau Tissmer.

"Why shouldn't they sing?" inquired her husband with a yawn, as he stretched himself in bed. "I can't complain about their work. In fact, I'm going to send for three more. I'd be a fool to pay out day workers' wages. And besides, it's an act of charity——"

"But how about their morals?" Ever since Herr Tissmer had returned to "Mellen," after having assured all his capable relatives that the mistress of the farm was no longer in need of their assistance, people at the county office had talked about the strict morals that prevailed at "Mellen"—how two servant girls had been discharged because two hired men were found with them after midnight.

"How about their morals," Frau Tissmer angrily insisted. "Have you forgotten that we have a grown-up daughter? Their goings-on have already reached the limit."

Just then, from the corn-bin, a bold voice rang out:

"Und der Hans schleicht umher——"

"And that's supposed to be the daughter of a high-school director!" The woman at the window stretched her neck as far as she could see, in the direction of the barn. But all she could see was the open door and the ladder against the wall. "She's the worst of the lot. If only we had not saddled ourselves with her. I could swear, she's stealing eggs for your pick of the navy."

She shook with rage. Was the man really so innocent, or was he only pretending?

"Do you think for a minute their cheeks are puffing out on turnips?"

"Puffing out!" He shot out of bed, stood at her side, gave his men a look—and drew a breath of relief. There was really no sign of cheeks puffing out. "Well, they're *your* hens, aren't they? Let Susanna take care of them."

How she ripped that jacket off!

"We hardly need your advice for that." She was a stately woman, and he used to be afraid of her. But now, in perfect calm, he lay down again on the bed; and because he knew how enraged she was, he even lit a cigar.

"Sieh den Himmel, er ist trübe." A girl's voice near the corn-bin sang teasingly.

Frau Tissmer, trembling with anger and fear, poured water into her washbasin. "He suspects something," thought she, "he acts that way because he knows something. He must have come upon those letters." And she listened to the creaking in the hall. Susanna's door opened softly. Ah, she would slip into the henhouse. Perhaps she would surprise somebody who had accidentally found an egg.

In the henhouse, there was a big hullabaloo. Fräulein Grete and Fräulein Lenchen were catching the hens and feeling them. There was a big difference between those who still had their duty to perform and the lucky ones who had already done theirs. At a narrow window leaned the overseer, who had forced his breadth in, and was looking on. Around a long feeding trough in the poultry yard crowded turkeys and guinea-hens; indignant roosters angrily pecked their fleeing subjects from behind; out of the henhouse scurried a stream of scolding, cackling hens who had passed the examination, and two immense turkey-cocks gobbled gloweringly at each other, with spreading tails, as they circled round and round, their blue-red combs flashing in the sun.

Just then the overseer's dachshund growled. His master straightened up. "Well! Well! Our young lady is actually up already!" He smiled, bowed, wheeled about, went to the plow-horses in the big barn, went to the wagons and the saddle-horses in the stalls, looked in on the cows, and said something to the man, earnestly, deliberately, and with dignity. But as he reached his room, a mischievous twinkle shone in his eyes and spread over his whole face. On an alcohol burner, he set a fair-sized frying pan into which he cut a big slice of bacon. Then he dropped a number of eggs into the sizzling fat. Every morning, Dietz had to fetch this frying pan the moment the bell called the hands to breakfast. He carried it out in a strict military fashion, and only a "Respectfully, thank you," was permitted. At half-past six, however, the frying pan again stood empty and black and silent on its alcohol-burner. Rusty and dented was that burner —but it had served its time—though not for very long—in a dugout. One could easily come to like a rusty thing like that.

Morality at "Mellen" was really endangered. Fräulein Anneliese, the one with the golden braids, had requested Frau Tissmer, in the name of the other two girls, to excuse them from all intercourse with the family. The blond woman had regally nodded her head, but immediately had taken a hot bath to bring back her heart action. She was beside herself. How could one be so young and at the same time so depraved! She would have been an idiot if she had not guessed!

"She puts the others up to things," said Susanna. "We're in for some surprises!"

And they had their surprises. For every evening, right after seven o'clock, the girls and the new men in their turned blue uniforms and striped service caps, would stroll off together, laughing and singing, over the fields and through the meadows. Fräulein Anneliese always took Pit in her arms, when the ditches were too wide, or the way was too long for him. The Tissmer family, standing at the windows with their field glasses, would gaze after them. Once in a while, they could see the narrow-chested school master scampering to join the young people; and one evening they overheard what Mamsell was saying to *Mütter* Schmeling from the village. "Look at the legs on those fellows! And see how the teacher tries to run on those spindle-shanks of his! Now you can see how turnips make fat for one and bones for the other. Same as with pigs, *Mütter* Schmeling."

It was on one of these walks that Dietz found out from Anneliese why the lady of the house did not like her. They

had left the others a good distance behind, and had come to a wooded hillside, where relics of the ancient park still survived. Here, a slate-roofed pavilion, half rotted away, its steps crumbling resignedly, stood out against the deepening shadows. Bind-weed and English ivy choked its pillars. The path to the crumbling steps was overrun with a tangle of tall, blue larkspur. From the marshy patch beneath the beeches floated the sweetish odor of wild mint. Near the pavilion was an immense granite bowlder, upon which Dietz and Anneliese clambered. Here they rested. Below them, in the valley, they could hear the singing and the laughter of their friends, who were sitting beside a stream. Pit had run off to chase a wild rabbit.

Anneliese dreamily stroked the sun-warmed granite and talked about glacial deposits and the devastation of the Ice Age—about the Tundras of the north—and the grinding of the rocks. Dietz, too, stroked the granite, until his hand lay close to hers.

She said, "Herr Tissmer is selling this stone to the Cemetery Commission. They want it for a War Memorial."

Dietz was not interested. Even the yellowing barley fields, skirted by flame-colored poppies, or the green of the velvety bogs, dotted with clumps of alder, or the far-stretching potato fields in snowy blossom, reaching to the horizon line, left him cold. He was interested only in the little brown hand.

"How clever you are." He had to say *something*.

Oh no—she was not at all clever.

"I only repeat what my father used to tell me on our walks. I wish you could know him. Perhaps you've read about him in the papers. It was terrible the way they attacked him. Unpatriotic—disloyal—they called him. And they said he was robbing our youth of their ideals! All because he would

not let the freshmen boys of his school go to the front. He said he could not carry their young lives on his conscience. My father a coward! He resigned from the school—it was just after my brother was killed at sea. And then, in his fifty-fourth year, he volunteered. As a common soldier. You see he had never seen service before. All because of his poor eye sight. He had six weeks' training. Then his orders came. I'll never forget the day. His company was led by a boy lieutenant with his arm in a sling. On the bayonets were stuck bouquets of flowers. On my father's too; I put them on myself. And I walked by his side. So many never came back. That's why the wives and children were allowed to walk along for a stretch. The band played a march. It was meant to make us gay. But nobody was gay. I knew that my father was thinking of the Roman gladiators, in the circus, filing past Caesar, marching to their doom. But he did not say that. He said instead: 'May the world never forget what heroes these men are.' And then, suddenly, he began to talk about Hermann of old and his war on the Romans. He tried so hard to take my mind off the present. And he made a pathetic attempt to tease me, for he asked: 'Do you know against whom he fought?' And I purposely said 'Drusus,' so he could set me right, so we would not have to talk about our parting. That would have broken my heart. And he gave me a lesson to do, a composition on Augustus which he said I was to mail him in fourteen days."

She smiled sadly, her eyes filling with tears. Dietz, too, was smiling. His hand held hers. So close. So still.

"I once tried that," his voice gave way, "but my father was on to me——"

A long pause.

"That's why," said Anneliese, "Frau Tissmer does not like

me. And she thinks that because my father was not an officer, he did not amount to much. He has an artificial arm; and he is the bravest man in the whole world."

She slipped to the ground. Pit, making his escape from the tomcat, which also liked rabbit chases, barked uproariously as he bounded up to her. On Pit's friendly coat Anneliese dried her tears.

It was a miracle. In four weeks their hollow cheeks became round—fairly bloomed with health.

"Because they are really at work," said Herr Tissmer.

"Because of the eggs," thought the overseer.

"Because of the provisions," declared the girls.

They knew. From periodic visits to certain neighboring farm-women, they had often returned with generous baskets.

"This will never do," said Dietz to his roommates. "My belt is too tight. How can I buy new pants?"

They sat with gloomy faces. Their shoes, too, looked hopeless.

"The tops will hold out a while," said the pessimist, "but the soles are gone."

Wendheim contemplated his wooden ones and sighed: "When I think of my last patent leathers! I came on board after my furlough and reported to the first officer. He was standing on the bridge, teaching his terrier to beg. The first thing he saw was my shoes—and I already could hear him let loose at me for wearing them; but what do you think he said? 'Man alive,' he said, 'where did you get those shoes?' Yes, that's the kind they were."

The overseer came in. It was his first visit. As the three sprang to their feet, he awkwardly motioned them to sit down. "I've come on account of the Food Board inspectors.

They are due this morning," said he, "and we must get them drunk. But we have to do it natural-like, as though they had just surprised us at a celebration; for one of them is a teetotaler, and Herr Tissmer himself can't stand much drink."

They looked haughtily at the speaker. Herr Tissmer had seldom returned their greeting. They still had a shred of self-respect. Perhaps he thought that they would report the hidden produce. The suspicion was degrading. Never—even among themselves—had they mentioned the double floor in the storehouse, or the butter shipped to the city, butter that was already commandeered, nor had they ever told a soul about the cattle which were supposed to have met with disaster in jumping over the wagon shaft, but which had been secretly slaughtered, or about the sugar beets and potatoes which quietly left at night.

Dietz turned red as he said it. And the other two, by their looks, confirmed his words. It was humiliating enough to see how the master and his family slighted them. But that he should now want to buy their silence with a breakfast was a direct insult which could only be answered by quitting the job on the instant.

"You will be doing *me* a favor, gentlemen," said the overseer.

They looked at one another and each took a deep breath.

"In that case, Herr Inspektor, we're at your service," said the pessimist.

The three held a hasty council as to the correct dress for the occasion.

There was great excitement. A good friend at headquarters had given the overseer the tip. By every right, the inspectors should have swooped down on "Mellen" unannounced.

Four hundred inmates of the poultry yard had to be spirited away so that all questions regarding corn and unaccounted-for eggs would be avoided. That the poor cities had to be fed was something the food board quite overlooked. "Mellen" had to disclaim forty cows, a large flock of sheep, and any number of hogs—for the authorities were not disposed to take into consideration Herr Tissmer's theories on farm-management. The result would perhaps be a heavy fine.

As his hired men entered the dining room, Herr Tissmer, obviously frightened, warmly shook hands with them and thanked them for their visit. In his panic, he effusively bade them to sit down before the festive board.

"Just a cozy gentlemen's breakfast—a little celebration——"

The officers bowed with decorum.

"We have—so to speak—to be in the midst of it when they come," said the overseer, "otherwise there's no use! One of them is a Red. A smarty at one of these inspection breakfasts tried to palm off some vile stuff on him once by calling it champagne. Since that time he's on his guard. But if we invite him to something that's in full swing, he can't be suspicious. At the last inspection of horses, I sat next to the officials, and the horses are thankful to me for it to this day. Well then, gentlemen, who'll take the Red under his wing?"

That was a delicate question. So much depended upon the labels.

"On board, we drank untaxed Bordeaux, and at mess, first-class champagne," said the pessimist. "I'll stand up to five bottles of that easily. Light Moselle turns my stomach, same as the sour stuff does. So—if it's to be Saär wines, I beg to be excused."

Herr Tissmer was sure he did not hear correctly.

"On good Rhine wine, I'll stand up against any one," said Wendheim; "adulterations disagree with me."

The impudence! Did they think he would set his best before them!

"I propose," said Dietz, "that we start off with a good Rudesheimer, and gradually work up to the heavier sorts. It all depends on what state you wish the visitors reduced to."

Herr Tissmer clutched the back of a chair.

The overseer weighed the matter.

"We needn't go too far. They would have to stay overnight then. Perhaps just a good souse—so that we can shove them in a wagon and hustle them off on time. They shouldn't be loaded enough to see double, but just enough to put things in a blur for them."

"You mean a kind of deep-sea roll?"

Herr Tissmer regained his self-possession.

"My wife figured on three bottles for each examiner, and of course, for us, a bit less——"

The pessimist studied the labels on the bottles which had been provided by the mistress, inspected the supply already on ice, and, shaking his head, remarked: "I pass."

Then they all fell to reading the labels.

Dietz grandiosely declaimed:

"Denn dieses Weines Sauere
Ist eine so ungeheure
Das, fällt ein Tropfen auf dem Tisch,
Fährt er gleich mit grossen Gezisch
Durch die Platte.
Eisen zerstört er wie Watte!"

"Herr Tissmer, you had better take one of these gentlemen into the cellar. Ladies haven't the right instinct for

wines." The overseer looked knowingly at his chief. "On an occasion like this, too much is at stake. And anyway, you got your wines cheap."

Thank God, he had sent his wife and daughter to town! Thank God that his sons were away! They would have thought him crazy had they seen him standing with Dietz before the opened wine closets. "I am somewhat of a judge," said Dietz. "My father used to have a first-class cellar."

Herr Tissmer could well believe that when he saw the son's selections. He acquiesced dumbly, if only to spite his wife. Should *he* not drink anything? Should these fellows alone guzzle his red Assmanshäuser? And his Deidesheimer? And Henckel Dry——?

"Judging by the wines on your buffet, no one would suspect you were giving a jolly stag breakfast!" said Dietz, mounting the steps and hugging four bottles under each arm.

With a vague hope Herr Tissmer ventured, "But we don't have to put so much on the table right away!"

Dietz raised no objection.

"I can get more later——"

The breakfast began. It was half past eleven.

On the big barn roof sat the milkboy. That was the post of observation. From there all the roads could be seen. Mamsell had given the boy a chunk of bread and a generous end of liver sausage to take with him. And if he saw the inspectors coming he was to yell, "Hurrah!"

At one o'clock he yelled, "Hurrah!"

The overseer rushed to the window. His face was flushed.

"Where are they?" he shouted.

"How should I know?" the boy cried. "But I've had no dinner!"

So the gooseboy brought him a dinner-pail. Mamsell added to it a chunk of bacon.

At two o'clock, it was Herr Tissmer who stuck his head out. His eyes were glazed. He had a slight hiccough and could not help laughing when he saw the urchin sitting on top the barn.

"Are they coming?" called Tissmer, in a voice that was strangely amiable.

"Naw," the boy shouted back, "but the bacon made me thirsty."

So the gooseboy had to clamber up again. Mamsell gave him a jug of beer. That is, so-called beer. When the inspectors finally arrived, at 3 o'clock, the milkboy did not spy them until they were already standing in the middle of the yard. For the gooseboy had stayed up there with him; and the two having played dice, the milkboy had a punch in the eye to nurse.

"Hurray!" he shouted. "They're all here!"

The three officials looked up at the barn-roof with astonishment. They stared wide-eyed at the open windows from which came peals of laughter. And if Mamsell had not dashed in and yelled the news into the overseer's ear, the visitors could have done their snooping without interruption! But the overseer quickly swallowed a glass of cognac to steady his legs, picked himself up heavily and went out to meet the officials. At the door, he heard Herr Tissmer, in an excellent humor, begin an old song: *"Was dommt dort von her Höh——"*

The inspectors stated that they had already breakfasted. They had no time to spare. And besides, they were not free for such occasions. All three wore field gray and service boots and caps—and glowered at the tipsy man.

"Birshday on the plashe," said he—"and the madam gone to town! Only besht in the 'shellar——"

Five minutes later, the three officials sat at the festal board—each between two hosts. Herr Tissmer wanted to know where these people came from, anyway, and who gave them permission to intrude. He was the master. This speech properly impressed the inspectors.

In a haze, the hired men remembered their duty. The overseer ordered black coffee, and then, for the third time, they trooped down to the cellar. On this trip, the pessimist joined them, to put a stop, so he said, to this endless running up and down.

They were now in full swing. The Navy had the upper hand. Its capacity was amazing, while its recitals were even more so. Dietz boasted about his captain, who had made up his mind to fly, but who, due to his arm-chair activities at the Admiralty, had shattered all records for over-weight. When at last, with great difficulty, he had managed to squeeze himself into the driver's seat of a plane, it was found that he did not have room enough. He had had to be sawed out, and the report had been spread about that he had jerked about in the machine for two hours, like a newly hatched cuckoo in its shell.

"But that is not possible," said one of the visitors.

Dietz shot him a look. "In the Navy everything is possible!"

The pessimist then told the story of the second admiral, who was somewhat of an ornithologist, and the Japanese cockatoo. 'Twas on board the *Nassau*, on the high seas, somewhere between Japan and Marshal Island. There was nothing to do but sweat and look at the sea. So the admiral got busy with his birds. The lieutenant captains were

ordered to make drawings of the new specimens he had come upon, and the staff officers were often disturbed at their games of chess, and even awakened from their sleep, to admire a rare example. The man was positively ruthless. Finally, one of the lieutenants hit upon the idea of giving the admiral a thrill. He shot an ordinary sea-gull, another painted it with a variety of colors, and a comrade glued a tuft of feathers on its head. The creature was then tied to the signal-mast, and the ensigns and lieutenants stationed themselves on the watch. The admiral came out of his cabin. Of course he spotted the bird and swore it was a Japanese cockatoo, and motioned to every one to remain still. He really would have preferred to have the engine stopped so that the bird would not be frightened off. His gun was brought. He stole nearer. Bang! Down went the bird! And dangled on two strings. The ensigns snickered. The admiral raved and fumed; and for three days after that, there was an epidemic of arrests.

How Herr Tissmer laughed! He turned blue—and held his shaking belly.

"Bang! Down he went. A thing like that can happen only in the Navy."

The pessimist pricked up his ears. "What do you mean?" he roared, and Dietz wheeled about, spilling some red wine on the snowy damask cloth. "What did you say?" In a flash Wendheim sprang up; he, too, felt himself affronted: "Herr——"

Herr Tissmer, facing six challenging eyes, became, for the moment, sober—forgot that these people were his underlings, and stammered out his explanation: "Because the land forces have no admirals."

Just then Fräulein Anneliese brought in a second helping of coffee. Very black. It seemed necessary to Mamsell. And

only the overseer and one of the inspectors kept up their interest in nature study. "What kind of bird was it?" asked the latter, "a cockatoo?"

"Yes sir," politely answered the overseer, "a Japanese."

Then he put the white Burgundy on the table.

The Burgundy was excellent. Herr Tissmer was again at his ease, and going from one to the other, proceeded to clink glasses. They all in turn solemnly looked into each other's eyes, drank to the last drop, significantly showed each other their empty glasses, bowed, and sat down again. And since this ceremony appealed to the overseer, he was not sparing with the Burgundy in the direction of the inspectors, but touched glasses with a *"Prosit, Meine Herren."*

When Fräulein Anneliese, at 8 o'clock, thought that strong coffee was needed again, Herr Tissmer was already standing on the table and holding forth. There was a good deal about the Fatherland in what he said, also about standing firm to the last man, and Dietz and the pessimist clutched him, when it looked as if he might keel over.

At nine o'clock, Mamsell came in with a bowl of butterpatties. "I don't know any more remedies," she observed to the girls, who were at the door listening delightedly to the officers, as the Navy boasted of Skaggerak and juggled with the names of the Admirals Behnke, Scheer and Hipper, as though these had been just ordinary mortals.

"Scheer had no idea we won Skaggerak," shouted Dietz. "He only found it out after we anchored in Wilhelmshafen."

And Herr Tissmer again attempted to hold his own. "Such a thing can happen only in the Navy."

Luckily no one heard him.

At half-past nine, the procession filed down to the cellar

to fetch something lighter. For the overseer had found that Burgundy was too heavy for prolonged imbibing. In the meantime, the Navy faithfuls had rolled Frau Tissmer's piano from its inaccessible location in her sitting room out into the dining room, unaware that they had left deep scratches on the parquet floor. Herr Tissmer said this was a great idea, and for the first selection, demanded the National Anthem. And though the hour was late, and Mamsell was in a rage, informing the girls that the gentlemen must be drunk, the party stood up and sang *Deutschland, Deutschland, Uber Alles*. Dietz accompanied them on the piano, and swung into the Flaggenlied:

"Dir woll'n wir treu ergeben sein,
Getreu bis in den Tod,
Dir woll'n wir unser Leben weih'n
Due Flagge Schwarz-weiss-rot."

They did not remember that the ships were lying on the bottom of the sea, the waves washing over their majestic hulls.

Herr Tissmer wanted to cheer for the Kaiser, but choked on something and lustily joined in the *Hoch* to the Republic. Then Dietz played a fox-trot.

At eleven o'clock, the wagon that brought the ladies back from town arrived. The women had heard the racket from the road. As they reached the yard, Frau Tissmer stiffened like a statue.

"Susanna!"

Susanna let her saintly eyes skim over the brightly lighted windows.

"Since when is the piano standing in the dining room!"

"What? My piano?"

Even before the wagon had stopped, Frau Tissmer jumped out. She rushed up the steps, where Mamsell met her, frightened and trembling.

"It's all the fault of the sailors! And the Gnädige Herr just turned a somersault, and the overseer has carried the three inspectors into the Turkish room and covered them with the tiger skins, and they've taken all the instruments from the wall, and Gnädige Herr is the funniest of the lot."

"Mama," commanded Susanna. "Don't go in—it's too disgusting."

"The piano! In my own house!"

The farmerettes came out with solemn faces and laughing eyes.

"How could you permit it." The big woman lost her voice.

Fräulein Anneliese shrugged her shoulders: "When the gentlemen carried up the Burgundy wine——"

"Burgundy!" She clutched at the air. She needed support.

"—so I told Herr Tissmer that Gnädige Frau had put some out. But he only laughed and wanted to kiss me. And that's something I won't allow——"

"Come, Mama!" commanded Susanna icily.

"It is not the fault of the Gnädige Herr," cut in Mamsell, "The sailors are to blame. It was they who picked out the rich wines, the sort the master cannot drink."

Frau Tissmer did not quite understand.

"In the cellar?"

"Yes. The overseer, too! They all went down, and an inspector fell down the stairs, and I gave them coffee four times, and it became worse and worse, and it's a wonder Gnädige Herr did not fall off the table."

"—off the table? ? ?"

"Yes," said Fräulein Gretchen, "he beat time for them."

"Mama!" warned Susanna once more, provoked and angry to see her mother talking with the girls. But it was too late now. The outraged woman had made a dash for the door—had torn it open——

It was more than she could bear. There, in the doorway, she was struck dumb—rooted to the spot. "*Der Kommandant ist Duhn*"—roared upon her—"*Was kann man dabei tun*?"

And her husband was singing along with the rest. Before him stood the Chinese gong, which he was beating like a cymbal. On his head perched a Hindoo helmet with a long neck-piece. It had slid too far back, conferring a distinctly comic effect. On the helmet crest was stuck an inverted wine-bottle. The overseer was sweating under a flat, copper head-piece, his collar and necktie on the table beside his coffee cup; and with the half empty bottle of red Assmannhäuser as an instrument, he was blowing on a sacred flute with cheeks puffed out. The pessimist was coaxing wierd rumblings out of a temple-drum, which he seemed to be able to manipulate with uncanny skill. Wendheim was struggling with a trombone-like thing, but he succeeded only in drawing out broken, spitting noises; while Dietz sat at the piano, in an Oriental dancing girl's costume, and put rhythm into the ensemble.

"*Der Kommandant is duhn*——"

The versatile brother-in-law, who had assembled the Oriental room—no one had ever suspected that he was really a Buddhist at heart—would have been shocked to see his collection put to such profane uses.

The only one who took notice of the mistress of the house was Pit. Lying out stretched out on a green silk pillow, embroidered with a golden dragon, he regarded the opening of the door as decidedly disturbing.

"In my house——!"

She wanted to yell it—but it came out tonelessly. Absolutely tonelessly. In her dining room. In an agony of fright, she remembered that the copper head-piece, now crowning the overseer's stupid head, had sheltered a little ebony box containing certain letters.

A hard, firm hand gripped her arm, pulled her back, and slammed the door——

"Mamsell, help me bring Gnädige Frau upstairs," commanded Susanna. Her lips were white. With a tight hold she clutched her dazed mother.

"The Navy officers must leave the house at once. They must leave the house to-morrow," she said.

At 3 o'clock, the rising-bell woke the overseer out of a short, fitful sleep. Under the weight of the copper helmet, he had drowsed away in an armchair. He stumbled to the open window and leaned far out.

"The saints preserve us!" gasped the milk woman as she set down her pail. "Is that you Herr Inspector?"

With glassy eyes he looked in her direction, raised his hand to his aching head, felt the heavy head-gear, and after much fumbling, managed to loosen the chin-strap. He made his way to the pump. The milkwoman took hold of the handle. He doused cold water over his hot, spinning head. Little by little, he began to remember.

"Have Mamsell bring me a plate of sour pickles," he moaned. Sour pickles, as a rule, helped. But this time, they

were of no effect. The sacred flute must have been to blame for that.

Herr Tissmer was not to be seen for three days. His wife had locked him in. Nor had the hired men gone back to work, and Fräulein Anneliese often pressed her hand to her heart. Frau Tissmer wanted to discharge the hired men, then and there, but the overseer reminded her that the law in such an event compelled her to pay a month's wages and keep.

"For," said the overseer, "they only obeyed orders. Herr Tissmer told them to make the inspectors drunk, which, of course, they could swear to in court."

Thereupon, each man received his 210 marks, with orders to leave the premises at once, or else be put off. They packed their boxes, and Wendheim laughed uproariously, laughed because the pessimist stood on the table and made a farewell oration that somewhat echoed Herr Tissmer's speech of the night before, while Dietz absent-mindedly brushed Pit and combed his whiskers, listening for footsteps outside the door. Nearby, from the potato cellar, came a girl's song: *"Muss i denn, muss i, denn zum Städtler hinaus, und Du, mein Schatz, bleibst hier—"* But suddenly it stopped, and Dietz foolishly clutched Pit against his breast.

Then came the milkboy. "Herr Inspector asks the gentlemen to come to him." The boy said unmistakably, "The gentlemen."

The overseer awaited the three, and invited them to sit down. They again noticed the tricky look in his eyes. But about his mouth played kindliness—sympathy. Perhaps, pity——

"I only want to say that I've been satisfied with you.

Herr Tissmer cannot tell you because Gnädige Frau thinks he is too sick. But he has signed your recommendations. And if I may give you a word of advice—you will think it strange—try peat-cutting. Here is a letter to a man I know. It's in Holstein. And when you become skilled, you can earn 100 marks a day. Get to work at it over the summer."

In strictly military fashion, the pessimist and Wendheim thanked him, but their eyes shone with gratitude. Dietz thanked him, too, while from the yard again came that song, so sad and wistful——

"Wenn komm, wenn komm, wenn i wiederum komm——"

They wanted to thank the foreman again, but he had something else to say. For this, he had to clear his throat and light a cigarette. After his first puff, he showed some embarrassment; he had forgotten to offer the men a smoke. Clumsily, he made amends.

"It's just this, gentlemen: both carloads of dried peas the food board ordered shipped to Essen have arrived safely. You know what a time we had getting them off. Herr Tissmer made a nice piece of money on the deal. And so did I, gentlemen. You certainly helped me out, and I told you at the time that you were not doing it for nothing."

He counted out of his wallet three one thousand mark notes.

He was a wily fox, as many a neighbor still says of him. And from the day he left "Mellen," Herr Tissmer himself called him the biggest rascal he had ever known. But these three will talk about him as they would about an absent

friend. Out of desperate and hungry outcasts he had made hopeful and happy boys. True, they had worked hard for him, but he, too, had calloused hands. He had seldom spoken to them, but he had never failed to look out for them. "And that's why," the pessimist said one day, "St. Peter will pass him through the gate—even though he did belong to the army."

When it dawned on them that they had not thanked the overseer sufficiently,—that they had only stood there, heads high, eyes unblinking, erect and motionless, as if on inspection, and that they barely had been able to swallow, until their "Thank you respectfully" became understandable,—it was already too late.

The old nag and the milkwagon passed the door.

"Good luck to you, gentlemen," said the overseer, closing the door, after the last man had filed out. He puffed like a steam engine, snatched his hat and stick, and vigorously started out to walk it off.

The boys watched the milkboy dragging out their trunks, and avoided each other's eyes. The blotchy pink servants' room became strangely transfigured, though a ray of sunlight had never entered it.

They were now ready to start; Pit sniffed with expectation. The boy cracked his whip. Nothing had been forgotten; and yet they stood waiting. Each one concealed from the others the fact that he was waiting.

Did some one knock? Pit's little tail wagged furiously.

The door flew open. There, with an air of defiance, stood Fräulein Anneliese; and yet she seemed bewildered. And Fräulein Gretchen and Fräulein Lenchen stood behind her, and they all had flushed cheeks, and looked as if they had had a stormy time of it.

"We can't let you go off alone like that," stammered Fräulein Anneliese at last, "Even if she forbids it a thousand times! We'll go with you part of the way, and come back on the milkwagon."

"Another blessing of the revolution," sneered Frau Tissmer, as she watched from behind the curtains. She still trembled from the effects of the encounter with the girls. "I will write to their parents. Such looseness and goings on I will not allow on my place."

The young people wanted to sing, but their voices choked. They wanted to talk with each other, but the words would not come. Fräulein Anneliese wanted to say how hard it was for her to part from Pit, and could only remain dumb. She seemed not even to know that Dietz was holding her hand—holding her hand tightly.

On a hill, far off, walked the overseer. He saluted. The boys snatched off their caps and waved lustily: three times.

XII

It seemed that they no longer understood each other. When they did speak, it was only to conceal their thoughts. Frau von Stauffen once gloried in having a husband who was most tender and indulgent. Always, when sorrow or disappointment came, he had been there for her to lean upon and she would run to him for comfort and refuge.

But now, she told him nothing. Her eyes burned from sleepless nights. When he looked at her, she would quickly turn away. "The bird has no water, poor little thing." "Shall I close the window?" "Don't be always reading the newspapers. They upset you so." But her heart wept. "What has happened to Fred? Why is he estranged from us? Only yesterday, when I asked him to stay a little longer, he looked at me as if he hated me. Whose hands has he fallen into? Who has made him a stranger to me?" She racked her brain. There was no answer. Whenever he came, whenever that only son came, these days, something cold and hostile came with him, something that fell upon her with icy weight and froze her blood. Anxiously, she would watch her husband's tired eyes as they rested on Fred. Of late, the colonel had been gruff and curt with the boy, and had flared up at him on the least provocation. And Fred—how was it possible?—Fred had talked back. Talked back in a tone that no longer held his former affection and respect. At such times his eyes would darken, the corners of his mouth would twitch, and his hands would tremble. What had happened to him? What had brought about the change in him? Whose influence had he come

under? Whenever he looked at his father, the latter's hair now snowy-white and his shrinking face a betrayal of his suffering, there was anger and annoyance in the son's glance. The last time he came, he had listened impatiently to his father's lifeless voice pleading: "When will you apply for border duty?" and a flame had spread over his face as he angrily shot back—to think that shame did not strike him dead on the spot!—"Am I, perhaps, living too long for you two?" And when she had tremblingly implored, "Stay with us to-day. Don't leave your father. We don't know how long we shall have him," he had given a sudden start, as though something in him had had to be on the defensive against so unreasonable a demand. And he had said he was too busy. He was always too busy.

Everything—her furniture, her silver, her linens—were now pledged for a loan. On account of Fred. She could not understand how she had ever brought herself to part with those things, things which her grandparents, even in their day, had already treasured as priceless heirlooms. "Surely, not this bowl," she had entreated. "It has been in the family so long. At every baptism. See—its ruby color is so mellow and so warm, even though the gold is worn away. The etching of the old family castle and park—how plainly it can still be seen." But when Lia heard about the bowl, she had known just what to say. "With me, Fred, it will be safe. We can put it in our vault until your mother wants it again. I'll lend her 100 marks on it. Just think—suppose it had fallen into the hands of a stranger."

"The less money we accept now, the less we shall have to pay back," Fred had said, as his mother gazed sadly at the rumpled bank note for which she had exchanged the family bowl.

"Are you sure we shall get the things back? Are you taking care of the papers?" she had asked, looking at the empty crystal closet, once her pride, as her eyes sought for the pieces that had used to grace the cabinets and commodes. She had not seen that Fred, in sudden anger, turned ashen pale. A receipt from Lia! From Lia who was so touching in her concern for him, for his parents. "Darling—I'll give you the money now. You know I haven't any more, but it will be enough to get your father to the country. And when he is himself again, he can have his things back. You know they are safe with us. And in case he doesn't take them back—you big, adorable, stupid you—we can keep them for our own little nest. It will seem all the more like home to you. Isn't that a good idea?" When he wanted to argue with her, she would kiss him, and paralyze his will. Once, when he had managed to decline her offer, remembering the helplessness with which his mother had watched the men carry out the pieces one by one,—when he had said to Lia, "This wardrobe must fetch at least 500 marks, that much has often been offered for it—it's a piece of rare old carving—" she had had one of her attacks, and had flung herself, screaming, on the carpet, "You don't trust me! Go—I don't want to see you ever again! Don't touch me! That's the thanks I get! I knew it! The minute money comes into it—" And for days, she had refused to see him.

Frau von Stauffen had seen the suffering in her son's face, and had reproached herself. It was bad enough that he had to look after the details of the unpleasant business. She had never questioned him again.

She felt her husband's eyes upon her. It was time to prattle about the canary bird—about the stupid newspapers —about anything. She had to hide her fears. To tell him

would be to complain about Fred. Fred, poor boy, was not to blame. Crushed and bruised by the long years of the war, he should have come home to be nursed, to be pampered; but instead he had been forced to seek his bread, to battle anew. And she was powerless to help him. Powerless.

Still, she made plans, took steps which she was sure would lead to something. Why did one have good friends, otherwise? Was it not her husband's pride which kept him away from these friends? How many in the past had remarked, warmly: "If I could only repay your kindness." How many, come to plead in behalf of a son, had said: "If ever the time comes when I can repay your friendship, let me know."—Well? Hadn't the time come? She would let them know!

When Herr von Stauffen left the house to take a little walk, his wife hastened to her desk. She wrote to these friends. Not bluntly and openly: "We are hungry. Without aid from kind friends, I see no hope for us." No, not that way. How could she shout her misery like that? She knew, from a thousand instances, that would be fatal. In her set, loss of money meant loss of caste, nothing short of complete social suicide. She wrote to Countess Erna. The Count had once been adjutant to the colonel, and was indebted to him for his training, his income, and the glowing recommendation which eventually had procured him his appointment at headquarters. That was the time the countess had effusively kissed Frau von Stauffen. "If ever I can be of service to you, please, please, let me do it—as a proof of friendship." During the war, the Count and Countess had become very rich. Two older brothers and three cousins, who had stood between them and a large inheritance, had been neatly removed by heroic deaths. To-day, only a word

on the part of the countess was necessary, and the Colonel could have a position and Fred a new start in life.

Frau von Stauffen wrote that she reproached herself for having so long neglected her charming young friend, apologized, and inquired about every one at the Castle. And how was the little lap dog? She even wanted to know that. She rambled on about her fancy needlework, about her neglect of music, about pleasant happenings in the families known to them both.

And at the close of the letter, in a casual way: "Sorry that, regarding us, there is very little good news. My husband's wound still gives him great pain. You've heard, of course, that his leg was amputated? But we are hopeful that, after a stay in the country, he will again be his old self. A pity the pensions are not yet settled. Formerly, one knew what to count on, but nowadays things are so uncertain. Now that our fortune, through my husband's illness, has dwindled, housekeeping is no small problem. By the way, I have a great favor to ask of you, dear Countess. If you should happen to hear of an opening, office work or anything, for that matter, do recommend my two. You know that only the best can be said of them."

The Countess answered promptly—sweetly and cordially, as was her way. She described her latest Richelieu embroidery and the new wing to the castle, and added that the lap dog was still the same little dear. In the postscript, she expressed her deep regret that she had no connections whatsoever. Had she received the request a few weeks earlier—but on second thought, it was really against her husband's policy ever to recommend anybody. The best friendships are apt to be broken through recommendations, he said. But she had no doubt that Herr von Stauffen, with

his unusual talents, would soon find an excellent position.

Frau von Stauffen wrote to Frau Gertrude. The latter's husband was the director of a big machine factory. During the war, he had manufactured hand-grenades. Out of his profits, he had been able to buy his wife an automobile for her birthday. The colonel, accompanied by his wife on one of his leaves from the front, had visited the factory to supervise the making of a new type of shell. It had been touching to see the Frau Direktor's concern for the colonel's modest wife. And the Herr Direktor, over and over again, had declared that the Fatherland was, indeed, fortunate in that the military and industrial forces were now so closely linked, and that if Herr Oberst should ever decide to put off his uniform and place his rich experience at the service of industry, his factory would deem it an honor to acquire him.

After eight days, Frau Gertrude answered that she recalled everything. But just now, they were swamped with applications. Aside from that, her husband, to-day, was a trusted government official, and it would harm his political standing were he to assist anyone so closely connected with the old order. Moreover, all appointments at the factory had to be approved by the Board of Directors. Military gentlemen had only themselves to thank, if the people felt mistrustful of them—though there were, of course, exceptions!

Frau von Stauffen tore the letter into tiny bits.

She wrote to a cousin, a noted exporter in Hamburg. He had many offices and employed hundreds of people. Before the war, he had dealt in ships. Now, he handled flour, sugar, and beans. He was at his desk when he was handed Frau von Stauffen's letter. Every word should have wrung his heart. This cousin had charged to the German Government's account all his ships held in foreign ports.

He was not only a good business man, but a thoroughgoing patriot as well. He sat, as an expert, in endless conferences and debates, that involving billions of marks due the poor shippers. Frau von Stauffen learned from his wife that at present he was in the midst of a big transaction involving the Fatherland, and therefore regretted that the pleasure of looking after a beloved relative was something he must just now forego. And besides, in Hamburg, it was impossible to place an officer. There were plenty of unemployed as it was, and dear cousin herself knew that a Hamburger always remained a Hamburger. The dear Colonel would never feel at home in this unfriendly city. Unfortunately, during some of the communistic disturbances, the pavilions in her park had been broken into and pillaged, while the castle on the Elbe was not equipped for a visitor in need of careful nursing, although, of course, nothing would give her more pleasure than a visit from such charming people.

Frau von Stauffen read. But when her husband asked "Who wrote?" she smiled—smiled, and looked at him vacantly—"Oh, it's from Hamburg. Olga wants to know how we are." The colonel sat bent over his desk, grappling with the mysteries of shorthand. She went to him and, stroking his thin hair, kissed his head and murmured, "You dear, dear man." He pressed her hand to his lips and rested his head on her breast. Tired, oh so tired. And she could feel how he sought strength in her.

The next day, the fourth letter came. And when she read it, the tears flowed from her eyes, gently and mildly. And the kitchen, where she read the letter, became a wide, wide field of many-colored flowers. The larks sang, and the sky was blue and endless.

She wept, and did not know it. And the hardness and heaviness which in the past months had encrusted her heart softened with those tears. Slowly, unaware of it, she lifted the letter to her lips. And yet, it was written on very ordinary paper, in a clumsy hand, just like a child's. And the spelling was atrocious. The old nurse had written that her former master and mistress were welcome. True, the little cottage which her husband had built long ago was very small, but their own few belongings could easily be moved into the attic, so that the Lieber Herr Oberst should not have to walk upstairs. And Frau Oberst could do her own cooking. For she, the nurse, and her husband, were old folks now, and did things differently than they used to many years ago as servants in the household of Lieutenant von Stauffen. But as for taking pay, they must say no. They were plain people and had never learned fine manners, but the master and lady must not think that they would take pay for so precious a visit.

Wide and blue was that sky. The flowers were blue. And the larks trilled their joy to the sky. The crust of hardness melted. She sat on the sofa with her husband, something she had not done in a long time. They held each other's hands. And before them lay the letter with its absurdities in spelling, with its awkwardness and ink-blots. But it breathed hope and loyalty. In spite of cares and sorrows—in spite of pains and hurts.

"I think I will light a cigar," said the colonel. "And let us drink the last of the Rüdesheimer to-day. You know where it is, Liebste. True, it was meant for a very special occasion. And bring the old photographs, too."

They sat there together—locked in each other's arms—on the sofa.

XIII

Before their journey came the great hope. For the nation, as well as for the colonel. When Frau von Stauffen first saw the news in the papers, she lifted her hands in prayer. And Maria, her sister, came running in breathlessly, "A new regime is in! An old friend of the family is a leading official. He's the man to turn to now. At last, a position will be found in this big, broad land, where the deserving colonel will fit in." Banished were the gray ghosts of fears. It was as though a light had pierced the gloom of their household, and had touched the melancholy coat of arms and the melancholy ancestral portraits with the radiance of a new hope.

"He may even get me into an institution," said Maria. "Why should we have helped to maintain those places all these years, if they will not take us in now. I could save my rent. I have my 2700 marks a year. That used to be plenty. But to-day, what can one do with it? I did write to countless advertisers. But hardly an answer came; only two. No wonder; they're waiting for women of the better classes. Housekeepers and companions, indeed. It's household drudges they want for nothing. I'd be willing to work for my keep. But the vegetable-woman says I am too old. Fifty-five isn't old, is it? I look old now. But that's from under-nourishment. Papa meant well by us. But he should have let me learn a profession. I could be earning my living now, as a bookkeeper or something."

Yes, hunger had laid its mark on her. Her face was yellow and pinched, and on her bony body her dress hung loosely. Her steps dragged wearily. Her eyes, in their deep

hollows, told of another hunger. Frau von Stauffen gave her a look of pity. Maria's youth, her strength, her entire self had been offered up for her father. He had accepted it as his due. After bringing up four daughters, wasn't he entitled to keep one of them as a comfort for his old age? Nor had the rest of the family questioned the dictates of destiny. But looking at her at this once Frau von Stauffen knew that cruelty, not destiny, had done that ordering.

"How is Fred?" asked Maria, her sunken cheeks suddenly showing two bright spots of red.

"He has so much to do," answered the sister, evasively. "He has volunteered for border-duty; but before going, he has so much to look after. Oh, Maria—these are hard days for our young people!"

And her fears for her son mounted up before her like a tower that threatened to fall upon and crush her.

Maria asked: "Do you ever see anything of that Frau Direktor—you know—the one papa couldn't stand—the one that made such a show of herself at the funeral?"

She wanted it to sound casual. But her throat felt tightly drawn.

Frau von Stauffen could not conceal her amazement. "We never were on such terms. How in the world did you come to ask such a thing?"

Maria swallowed. For a second, for a tiny second, she asked herself: Should she tell? Should she come out with it? She was not only ashamed; she was afraid. There was reproach in her sister's tone. And besides, she was afraid of Lia. How easy it would be for Lia to avenge herself on her. Many a time she had confided her little secrets to Lia, and cried herself out in her presence, on occasions when the family had thoughtlessly neglected her. If Lia should ever

make use of that, a real family scandal was bound to come of it.

She nervously searched for her cotton gloves. "I don't know how I came to think that I once saw Fred walking with her. I must have been mistaken."

When they parted, the sisters kissed affectionately, and loaded one another down with good wishes. But when Frau von Stauffen was back in her room, she did not think of the prospects of the new political regime, nor of the family friend who was now a high official. She stood rooted in the middle of the floor. "That can't be," she told herself. "With such a person—never—!

* * *

With a patient smile, the colonel listened to his wife. Then, he quietly said "No!"

That was more than she had expected.

"Why not? Why not? Your chance has come, and you're not going to take it? He was a friend of my father—a friend. Aside from the fact that he used to make his money through the family, my father gave him his start in life. I beg of you to go. I am sure he will help us. You must go. He has influence everywhere. He needn't get you an important post. That would be uncalled for. But when I stop to think that Hauptmann Alberti, who certainly never cut a big figure, and who can't hold a candle to you, is privy counsellor today, and that Blenken who has more debts than hairs on his head, and who never in his life put through a clean business transaction, is now the director of a large corporation, with an automobile and a twelve-room apartment—think what that means; while you who want

only a modest little home and just enough to keep us from starving—you say no."

"I'm through with begging," said the colonel.

"That's not begging! It's your due! The state promised to look after you. Is it keeping faith? 'Your wounds shall not hurt you. Positions shall await you.' What has the Fatherland given you until now? Not even your pension. You must tell him that. And if you will not ask it for yourself—then, it's your duty to ask it for me. For me. Do you hear? It's your duty. I want to be a happy wife once more. I can't go on like this. My fears are killing me. Just see what I look like. For my sake, you must go to him."

He stared at her. Her voice gave out. She was so deeply shaken that the blood came and went in her cheeks. He stared at her, and for the first time, saw what had become of the once radiant woman. In his fright, he felt his forehead growing moist.

"You are right," said he, his voice strangely broken. "I will go to him."

But it took a few days before he could pull himself together for the visit.

He wrote for an interview and received a courteous reply. His Excellency would await him on the following day, between twelve and a quarter past.

"Do you see," cried his wife, her voice ringing with joy. "Do you see? I knew it! It would have been unthinkable for him to forget everything. To forget that he used to call mama by her first name."

The colonel did not answer. But the next morning, he said to his wife, in a trembling voice, "Lay out my uniform." He took all his medals from the box that held the precious keepsakes of other days. As he pinned them on his

breast and looked at himself in the glass, he stood erect, as if at inspection. Respect for the coat, respect for the decorations compelled that. Each decoration stood for a heroism on the part of his regiment, for an act of bravery on his own part in the face of the enemy; each one proclaimed that he had done his duty, that he had kept his oath to his Kaiser and his flag.

He was ready to go. With deep tenderness, and in knightly fashion, he kissed his wife's hand. She stood at the window and watched him painfully make his way down the street, head high, a different man than the stranger he was in civilian dress. She felt the beat of her heart, like hammer-blows in her throat. Her tears, too long held back, gushed hotly from her eyes. "You poor, poor man," she moaned—"You poor, poor man——"

How kind! His Excellency remembered everything, the Christian name of his honored friend the General, all the children, and even his welcomed visitor. Yes, even him. "You had just been made captain, then." He sat behind a vast writing-table, in a high-backed elaborately carved chair. The table was strewn with papers, and among them perched a bronze object, the German imperial eagle. But in the litter of papers, the bird looked pretty woeful, not the bird of other days. At its feet lay a sample of the new German flag, the emblem of the Republic. The newly acquired gold in it struck the colonel like a knife-thrust; it mocked at him. He quickly glanced away, and let his eyes sweep over the costly rug and the pictures on the walls, which had witnessed the glory of the Empire that was.

He made his request, respectfully.

With what sympathy the man listened. How cordially he promised everything. Though he himself lacked the

necessary influence among business-men and officials: "You realize, Herr Oberst, that in the face of the passions let loose to-day, we are powerless." However, he promised to start pulling the necessary wires immediately. The country certainly was indebted to its old soldiers, now so loyally seeking new channels for serving her. "Whatever I possibly can, I will do for you." He said it with touching sincerity. He shook hands with the colonel, and asked to be kindly remembered at home. It was a broad, hairy hand, and its grip was firm and hearty.

In the days that followed, Herr von Stauffen talked very little. But he diligently read Schlieffen on the "Art of War," while his wife, at work with a heaped mending basket sat beside him. Whenever she glanced up and saw the gray bent head, with its high waxen forehead, her heart would leap.

"You will soon have help, you best of men." And often the mists gathered before her eyes. "To think that I ever talked to you that way. But I had to. For your sake. And some day, you will thank me."

And wasn't she right? The minister himself summoned the Colonel. A boy brought the message. With folded hands, she stood waiting while her husband read. "You know, Merciful Father, it isn't for me. But he must not despair."

The minister was all kindliness. He was young and well-dressed, looking more the part of a dapper, easy-going clerk. His office, too, was a vast room, with any number of massive armchairs and a rug of fabulous price. A pretty typist bent over her machine. Her quick eye had already taken in the old soldier and his medals, his military jacket, so pathetically wrinkled, and the dead earnestness of his narrow face. They look so comical, these elderly gentlemen.

Lord knows what they used to be! Officials nowadays all bowed to her, but this old fossil acted as though she were not even in the room. He hasn't yet tumbled to the fact that his whole gang, decorations and all, were nothing more than so much rubbish. Plain, ordinary rubbish.

The minister, with touching humanity, begged the colonel not to address him as Excellency. A title was not what he had been after when he gave himself to his country. Thank God, the nation was now at the point when a man could serve her interests without being lickspittled and paraded with meaningless insignia. He did not hesitate to disclose that it was only for the sake of his country's dignity that he used an automobile. The true and just saying, "Success to the deserving," was being exemplified to-day. And he knew that before him stood a capable worker. For didn't his Excellency himself recommend Herr von Stauffen? If Herr von Stauffen would, therefore, kindly look up Herr So-and-So, the Director of the Tax-Ministry, and say he had been sent from this office.

This Herr Direktor of the Tax-Ministry was not so confidential as his chief. As an ex-petty officer of the commissary, he was a consistent anti-miltarist. That was why the sight of the colonel in full uniform affected him like a personal affront. Making a great show of writing an urgent order, he remained seated in his upholstered chair. His fat fingers held a lighted cigar.

Unasked, Herr von Stauffen sat down.

The director rummaged among some papers, and at last found the minister's memorandum.

"So—Colonel von Stauffen—quite so!"

He pressed a button.

A girl appeared. She looked like a marcelled wax doll in a beauty-shop window. Her finger nails flashed lustrously, while her perfume helped to emphasize her presence further. She tossed the colonel an indifferent glance.

"Herr Ministerial Direktor?"

"The correspondence regarding Stauffen."

The correspondence was brought. It consisted of two long envelopes and two short notations. These the official read. The girl made a pretext of sorting some papers before she withdrew.

The colonel's eyes followed her to the door. He caught the look in her eyes. It stung him like the lash of a whip. Did she think that because a man was maimed he was an exhibit for the curious? She probably reserved the same glance for the cripple with the hand-organ, or for the poor devil who lay sprawled on the sidewalk displaying his broken body. The colonel's eye followed her to the door. It strayed back to the man at the desk—self-assured, in that huge stuffed-leather chair of his, arrogant—for all his show of democracy, arrogant in his contempt for the uniform before him.

The man met the Colonel's gaze. He became aware of something strange. This soldier with his medals no longer stood before him as a man. He had become a symbol. An impersonal thing. Between the two, as they looked at one another, something menacing arose, something that, in all its starkness, in all its nakedness, stood before them for the first time. It towered over them, ready to tear from them every shred of the past, merciless to him who did not uproot and tear out of himself what had, for a whole lifetime, been bred into his being.

The director was the first to speak. "Why did the chief palm you off on me? He knows I can't make a move without

the consent of the man over me, who has no use for army officers."

He seemed to expect an answer. But the colonel only looked at him, looked at him as if that purpling face, the thick moist lips, interested him. He thought: "What could this man have been before he became Ministerial direktor?"

"I will try someone in the finance department," continued the official. "He may make room for you. Take your papers." He picked up one of them at random and glanced at it. "So you have a great talent for organization, have you? Let me tip you off. Forget it! It doesn't mean a thing. I have yet to come across a snip of a lieutenant who hasn't boasted as much."

The colonel continued to look at the man. His eyes narrowed slightly. Strange that, just at this moment, he should see himself, at the head of his men, leading the attack into the thick of the enemy's fire, the fire from the fleeing enemy. Had that really happened? Had the field marshal really shaken his hand in thanks? But what was *this*, this monstrous, nameless thing that now confronted him and tore from him everything that once had meant life, that once had meant honor?

The other still waited. For thanks?

"Well then—go to this place," he snapped, scribbling an address on a slip of paper which he shoved toward the colonel.

The colonel slowly lifted himself from his chair. He heard the man say, "If it weren't that his Excellency himself is back of you, you wouldn't stand a chance. We've cleaned house long ago of handsome outfits like yours."

In reply, Herr von Stauffen only smiled, bowed stiffly, and with his thumping step left the room. The stump of his leg

ached. But on his face, the smile remained. He thought of his wife: "You foolish little optimist."

She wanted to know all about it. He told her. Also that, to-morrow, he must report to the Treasury Department.

"Do you see?" she cried joyfully. "Do you see? It only takes the right man." Absently, he nodded. Yes. But she was puzzled when he inquired, as if out of a clear sky, "Didn't you want to make a dress out of my old cloak? And while you're about it, you may as well cut up both of them."

The finance department was located in the heart of Berlin. To reach it, the colonel had to ride almost an hour. He dragged himself wearily up four dirty, narrow flights of stairs. From the corridors poured stale, heavy air. At the doors were crowded irritable, shrill-voiced men. They were clamoring and scolding for having been kept waiting—everywhere noise and confusion—the halls filled with angry taxpayers.

Four flights up! Who would think that a wooden leg could be so heavy, that a heart could be so heavy. He wiped the sweat from his forehead. It was as hot as a bake-oven up there.

At last, he reached Department 14.

At a bookkepeer's desk stood a red-haired, freckled-faced man, in a short, ill-fitting, threadbare coat, bedraggled field gray breeches, and sullen-looking boots, much too big for him. He did not like the interruption. When the colonel called him away, he began leisurely to study his desk-clock in its celluloid case, very leisurely comparing it with the slow-ticking time-piece on the wall. Then he folded,

with bureaucratic accuracy, a newspaper on which egg-shells and sausage skins were strewn. Finally he turned around to face his visitor. As he read the message addressed to the director, he scratched himself in the hollow of his knee, gaped a few times at the new applicant, and made it quite plain that he was taking his time. He began walking slowly into the adjoining room. On the back of his neck was stuck a patch of plaster which caused him to thrust his head forward.

The colonel waited. One at a time, three men appeared. Officials all, in Department 14. Two wore spectacles. Over the rims, they looked at the stranger, whom they regarded as an intruder. The colonel heard some lively whisperings, "Who can act on this?" "Who's got the say now?" Finally he was ushered in to see the chief.

This gentleman was youngish and genial. He exuded something that compelled hope and confidence. For a few months, he had once served on the staff of a newspaper and had shown unexpected ability. On the strength of this, he held his present post.

On the day of his appointment, he had begun to part his hair carefully, in a meticulous straight line. And since he lived by the creed that no matter where he might find himself, the main thing was bluff, the moment he sent word to the colonel to come into his presence, he became so engrossed in his work that the visitor had to remind him twice that he had been sent for.

" You can now see for yourself how overburdened we public servants are," said the chief, "and would you believe it, I even made a note of your case. So—you've been sent by his Excellency himself? That's the way it goes. The man who has the pull. Between you and me, Herr Oberst, it's a big

concession. Placed with immediate salary! You certainly ought to be congratulated! As for the rest, *Rechnungsrat;* Kulike has been informed, and he will see that you are started. I advise you, though, to study up on tax-laws, and to brush up on matters of finance."

The colonel bought a copy of the latest tax-laws. He told his wife that he was greatly relieved to find the men in the department quite congenial, and added that rapid promotion had been promised him.

"And have you a pleasant room? Is the atmosphere friendly? Have you a comfortable chair?"

He laughed. He had to laugh.

"Funny,—you have not yet given up the rôle of Frau Oberst. But really, everything that belongs in the place is there. However, they make no exceptions. In fact, the appointment is a sort of a concession."

She left the room. Her heart was full of hope, full of gratitude—to God, who had, after all, looked out for them. She came back to the room, carrying the two army cloaks to rip. Her husband sat at his desk, studying finance reforms, reading the tax-levies with his eyes; but inwardly, he stood once more beside his guns—his regiment.

The garments lay on her lap. She had found the length and width of the cloth with a tape measure. The fashion-sheet told exactly how the pattern should be laid on, how the strips had to be used up, how, with a little effort, one could make a modish dress out of a discarded army-coat. She was ready to rip. First the lining, then the big seams.

But those dusty seams, those bright red facings, and the mark left on the cloth by the iron cross all reminded her, once more, of the past. Once this garment had stood for something. Now it was just so much stuff, so much skimpy,

shabby stuff for a woman's dress. She wanted to rip, but a mist lay before her eyes.

Her husband rose from his chair. He was coming over to her. She did not look up. She was conscious that his step had halted.

"What a handsome piece of cloth that was," he said at last, stroking the old cloak.

"Yes," she said, and her voice sounded almost bold. "But it's pretty badly worn."

"And how beautifully it was tailored." He bent nearer. "It's the one I got when I was made captain."

She appeared to be turning this over in her mind. She looked at the other cloak.

"Wasn't it this one?"

She knew too well it was not this one, that it was the other one he had worn for the first time as Captain. She remembered the day too well. What a joy just to look at him. A little vain, true enough. He had a right to be. Yes, yes, that was the one. Didn't she know? But she went on playing her little game. How else would she be able to turn that sacred vestment into an ordinary piece of cloth to be cut up? The scissors shook in her hand, and the mist before her eyes grew thicker. How it must hurt him. How could she mistake the coats! Each one meant an epoch; each one had accompanied him on a big slice of his life's journey. He held up the one on his wife's lap. It all came back to him. He was a captain—the riding course—the battery—that memorable morning—riding at the head of the formation.

"If you've changed your mind," said Frau von Stauffen trying to smile, but succeeding only in looking pitiable, "but you yourself said you had no more use for it." He did not

answer. He examined the cloak from every side. He even went through its pockets.

"I really don't need that dress so badly."

Did he hear? He walked toward window, hugging the coat to his breast. "Twelve years ago. I remember it so plainly: The inspection—twelve years ago. One still had one's self-respect then."

Could such a thing be cut up? A thing that is not just so much stuff, and could never become just so much stuff?

Laying down the scissors, Frau von Stauffen quickly left the room. She had to wipe her eyes. Her husband must not see. He must not know that she shared his hurt with him. How had she brought herself to it—she, of all people! To touch the wound he so bravely hid from her. She, of all people!

She came back into the room. He was lying on the sofa, his face to the wall. Over him was spread the cloak. Like a robe of state. She pretended that she believed him to be asleep, and left the room silently, on her toes.

XIV

Frau von Stauffen liked her husband's plan. In the few remaining weeks, until their departure, he was to make himself familiar with his duties at the tax-office. And when they left, he was to take with him all the necessary reading matter, so that, in the quiet of the country, he would be able to master the details of his new profession. His new superiors must be shown that he amounted to something. He climbed the stairs daily. He did, submissively, the work which the red-haired fellow put before him, and heard his co-workers talk about him in whispers. He saw with what hostility they looked at him. What right had he to his place? Did he think he could worm himself in, learn all he could and then grab a bigger job? Those days were over. The republic had put an end to things like that. To help these army worthies to higher places; was that what the department of finance was there for? The men laughed at him as he figured, figured, during the hour-off for breakfast. To his polite questions, they returned cutting answers and loudly told each other stories about the worthlessness and incompetence of army officers, who alone were to blame for the loss of the war. They regaled each other with stories of their own brave deeds—in the supply department—many miles from the front. But what hadn't they lived through. The reports they had had to make out, piles of them. They knew, all right, what had been going on those days, the sins which had been committed against the German people. Nobody could fool them.

During these recitals, the colonel would look at his wooden leg. It said to him, "You did your part." And as he saw

the hostile glances of the whisperers, who called themselves his colleagues, his face would take on a look of challenge. In their presence, he felt the full pride of the man who has bled for his country.

"You are so quiet," said his wife; "don't you like your work?"

He kissed her hand.

"Forgive me," he begged. "It is all so new to me. But I'm coming along nicely."

"And it isn't too big a strain?"

"No, no. I really did not believe I should get used to it so quickly."

He longed to see Fred. He wanted to talk with his son, his own son, who personified for him the future, who one day, when the father was laid to rest, would become the mother's support. But the dread, the secret, gnawing dread which for weeks he had feared to acknowledge, even to himself, now clamored to be reckoned with. Why is Fred avoiding me? What has come between us? In what way have I failed him? His confidence in me is gone. "Oh, Fred, you poor boy," his heart cried out, "you don't know the bitterness of the words, 'too late.'" He asked his wife, "Where can Fred be?" He knew that she lied, when she bravely answered, "He just left." But where did Fred stay? He had already been assigned to border-duty, yet he remained in town. Why did Fred no longer see in him the father whose counsel, whose friendship, once had meant everything? Was he now nothing more to his son than a cripple who had become a burden? With what love he had once looked on his boys,—his promising cadets and how proud they had been of him, their father. They had looked to him as their ex-

ample, in every word and deed. That was in the days when the uniform had stood for something.

For eight days now, he had gone to the tax-office. Each day, it had become harder for him to climb the stairs. It had taken the last of his strength to drag himself up the long ascent. On the ninth day, he gave up.

"I'm a little tired," he said to his wife, "I'd like to stay in bed."

She hid her trembling fear. She smiled—a wan sort of smile: "I'm so glad."

But her eyes were fixed in terror on her husband's sunken cheeks.

"Nothing ails you?"

"No, my dear."

"Are you sure you're only tired?"

"Yes, my dear, only tired."

She remained sitting at his bedside until he fell asleep. She held his hand, and for the thousandth time repeated to herself, "When you go, I go with you." From this, she drew comfort, a strength-giving comfort.

She tip-toed from the room and set out for the Tax-office. Now was the time to see for herself. And besides, her husband's absence had to be explained.

How far it was. And the building—how depressing. She stood before the doorway, which gaped at her like a sinister mouth. She felt her heart leap suddenly to her throat. Her knees began to shake.

She began to climb the stairs, the worn-down, dirty stairs. The higher she climbed, the tighter became the strangling in her throat. She paused at every landing. She had to get her breath. The sickening ache that filled her made her close her eyes, again and again. She leaned against the wall,

as if to let the floor under her cave in. So this was what he had been coming to daily. What a torture it must have been for him. Why hadn't she come with him the first day—as she had wanted to? Why had she believed him, when he said, "I don't like you to accompany me. It looks queer." Now she knew why he had not let her. She must not see this place. She had had such confidence in that influential friend, and he did not want her to lose that confidence.

She did not know that heavy tears were rolling down her cheeks. She was aware only of a dinning in her ears: "He did it for me! He did it for me!"

But when, at last, she stood in the office, "where everything is most congenial," when she saw his associates, who were "really very decent fellows," her tears were held in check. She pulled herself together in the presence of these men, who looked at her curiously and stealthily, pretending they did not see her.

"I wish to speak with the director."

They looked up from their desks. The red-haired one took his blotter, pressed it down with deliberation and too much weight on the freshly written words, gazed critically at the result, slowly took another sheet of paper, and inquired over his shoulder:

"What do you wish?"

"Please say that Frau von Stauffen wishes an interview."

She felt not only the curiosity of these men; she felt their enmity. She saw them exchange glances, as the man with the dirty plaster on his neck slowly left the room, his head thrust forward. She heard his voice in the adjoining room, then a burst of raw laughter.

So those were his "colleagues"!

"His Excellency asks you to step in."

She walked past the men. She felt her blood grow icy. The thought went through her. "Fred should not have permitted this." But, no,—she herself was to blame. Only she.

"What can I do for you?"

His Excellency made a movement as if to rise to his feet. But he remained seated. Approvingly, his well cared-for hands stroked his pomaded hair.

She told him her husband was ill and begged to be excused for the day.

"Oh," said he.

But she herself desired an answer to a few questions. What prospects for advancement did her husband have? What was his present salary? After his injury on the field, he no longer had a great deal of endurance, and must be spared.

She was astonished at the sound of her voice, leaden and toneless. Astonished at the young man, who sat with legs crossed, lolling in the over-stuffed armchair, while she sat on the edge of a rigid, cane-seated, wooden one. She tried to take in what he was telling her, in his friendly, chatty way. It was an extraordinary concession for his Excellency to arrange for the appointment. It certainly made bad blood among the others. The old régime had been turned out, hadn't it? By all rights, the colonel's appointment should have gone to some one from the ranks.

"'But my husband was an active soldier," said Frau von Stauffen, reddening.

"That's just it. To-day, we have to swim with the current. The voters have done away with tradition, with all the red tape and log-rolling. Free rein to the deserving. That's the order of the moment. I myself have worked my way up

from under secretary to my present office. Was such a thing possible in the old days?"

"And the salary?" asked Frau von Stauffen; "what may we expect?"

He reached for a sheet of figures.

"We have to go by schedule. The first year he will get 1215 marks a month, that's 14,580 marks a year. Of course, from this sum his pension is deducted."

"Deducted?"

"Certainly. The state can't pay double."

Had she heard correctly?

"But—my husband—he had hoped through his position to better his income. It is not possible to live on the pension, and we don't even know what he will get!"

Smiling, he lightly shrugged his shoulders.

"That's hardly a matter for my department, Gnädige Frau."

She rose to her feet—her face ashen—a forced smile on her lips.

"And our friend, his Excellency, knew all this?"

He looked at her in amazement.

"Of course, he did! And, Gnädige Frau, in all justice, isn't it fair? Our poor Fatherland has been stripped. Any further demand would bring on complete bankruptcy."

This made her laugh; shrilly and sharply.

"To think that I should have forgotten that. His Excellency knew it all the time."

And still laughing, she bowed herself out. She did not perceive the stupefaction with which the young man stared at her. Laughing, she walked out past the astonished colleagues. She did not know she was laughing, until she reached the corridor and stood there alone. Then only did

she hear her own frightful, piercing laughter. Her teeth knocked together. She stared before her in terror.

"God have mercy! Don't let me lose my mind! Don't! Anything, only not that!"

She rode home in the subway. She overheard two sporty-looking young men who blocked the doorway grow indignant over a story they were telling two young girls in summery frocks. A lieutenant-colonel and his wife, the story ran, had sold their bodies to the "Anatomie" in exchange for a bottle of red wine. It seemed, they had shut themselves up in the room which the housing authorities had assigned them when the rest of their house had been seized. The man, severely wounded in the war, had had nothing to live on. The couple had been found holding each other by the hand, each with a bullet in the heart.

"Disgusting!" said the young person in pink. "It's enough to spoil one's appetite for lunch."

And the one in hyacinth-blue shuddered.

"The 'Anatomie'? Isn't that where they cut up the bodies of the dead?"

XV

Frau Lia and her husband made roseate plans. They wanted to build a 'cute' little house with a glass porch, and with a garage, and two guest rooms on the second floor. And the baby's room was to be all in white. For, like a miracle, after four years, Frau Lia expected her first child.

"And we'll get a Spreewald nurse," said she, "just to make your sisters jealous!"

He was satisfied. He was satisfied with everything. He had fallen in soft with his Lia. Now, she even expected a baby. And if it should be a boy, he was to inherit his uncle's whole fortune. All his family, who up to this time had had nothing to do with Lia, began to take notice of her. His sisters paid her visits; and his mother, who in the past could never endure the sight of her, had lately asked after her twice. He was happy! He was proud!

"It *will* be a boy, won't it, Lia?"

"What else can it be? Don't we want the money? It will *have* to be a boy! If worst comes to worst," and she had laughed her hard laugh, "a boy will be slipped in, and we'll put the girl out to board. Agreed?"

To what wouldn't he have agreed. He was floating on a sea of bliss. And as she outlined the plan for the house, he said 'yes' to everything. He would have said yes, had she wanted a ballroom or an ancestral portrait gallery. He adored her, and knew no greater joy than when he saw her surrounded by her sisters-in-law making overtures. "Oh, Lia," your cake is so good." "Oh, Lia, how darling you look." "Lia, you must come over to-day. It's so different when you're

around." And Lia would laugh. Laugh her brazen laugh, while the brothers-in-laws stealthily admired her.

"Those cats hate the sight of me," she said to her husband, "but since they've found out that I have money, I'm somebody. Oh, Lutz, what a love of an uncle you have!"

Lutz thought so, too. When he and his wife went to see the old man, uncle never objected when Lia read the paper to him. "Her reading is so comical, my son." And Lutz would go his way on some errand, or else would go to his aunt's room and sit beside her until she dropped off to sleep.

"Lutz—what'll we do with these Stauffen things?" asked Lia. "I promised Fred 5,000 marks for them. But I think we can get them for less."

"Does he want to sell them?"

"God forbid! But I want to *buy* them. Do you think I'd let a chance like that go by? Can't you just picture them in our villa? Leave it to me. We'll get them for next to nothing."

She blew him a kiss and listened to his laughter, as she disappeared to dress for Fred. Three times, she had sent the latter away, refusing to see him. But this morning she had received a letter. It sounded as if he were in dead earnest. She was beginning to be provoked with him. What did he think, anyway? Where did he come in, to write in such a tone? He wanted his rights? Wanted to know when the divorce was to come off? Insisted that she leave her husband's house? It was high time he left for border-duty. He was getting on her nerves. Lucky thing Lutz was so easy to fool. But, she reflected, as she turned to the big mirror to look at herself, could she be sure that her husband trusted her? True, she had made a rich man out of him. Where would he be to-day without her? A no-account salesman on the

road. And those fine, imported cigars and red wines out of uncle's supply, there'd be an end to them. Lutz was wise.

She dressed for Fred. Billowy salmon-pink taffeta, with clusters of pastel-flowers, a good daub of pink powder, the French kind Fred liked so much. She pencilled her eyebrows carefully.

"Aren't you coming?" called her husband. "It's so dull without you."

She bit her lips. On her low forehead, there was a deep furrow.

"I have no time. And anyway, to-night's your regimental meeting." She laid great stress on his loyalty to the regiment. She kissed him through the crack of the door, as she shut him out of the house.

Fred had written he would come at eight. An hour earlier, he was still with his parents. A light had suddenly dawned on him. He felt himself coming back to his senses. He felt an outrush of pity for these two from whom he had become estranged, because a woman had said, "They never understood you." How could he ever have believed her, believed that this quiet, earnest man speaking to him as if in farewell, was his enemy? That this kindly, smiling woman, stroking his fevered hand, this saintly woman, whose gentle eyes were like a benediction, had never really loved him? Had he suddenly been struck blind? Didn't a peace go out from these two, as they sat there, hand in hand, on the old sofa, the sofa Lia was so anxious to get—these two who did not talk about the future, but only called back to life the years of the past. These moments with them were beautiful—like a delicious bit out of his childhood.

At nine o'clock, he got up to go.

"It's a pity you must go," said his mother. Not a shade of

reproach in her voice. "Do come again soon. Let us make the most of the time we still have together. It's so long since we've had such a lovely evening."

"Come again soon," said the colonel. "You can see how glad your mother is. And it's a great relief to know you're near us, when the last call comes."

A scorching lump choked Fred's throat. He swayed on his feet. The ground seemed to open before him. When his father stretched out his arms to draw him to him, ashamed of such tenderness in a soldier, everything turned black before his eyes. On the stairs, he could no longer keep back his sobs. Clutching the banister, he felt the walls around him rock. "Father! Father!" he groaned, torn with pain and remorse. When he reached the street, he was staggering; it was as if The Angel with the Flaming Sword had driven him out of his Paradise.

Lia received him in a tantrum.

"I have been waiting more than two hours. Since when is it so hard for you to break away from them?" But when she saw his ashen face, she took another tack. "What's happened? How bad you look. Have a Schnapps." She helped him with his coat.

He followed her into the sitting room, now furnished with the Stauffen things. He dropped into a wing chair. This chair had once been his grandfather's favorite. His great-grandfather had died in it. Gripping the arms of the chair, Fred sat rigid, his gaze fixed on the Empire cabinet, filled with his mother's crystal ware.

"Why don't you have a drink," urged Lia, as she held the glass to his lips.

Sharply, he turned upon her, spilling the contents of the glass.

"When is the trial coming up?"

"Trial . . . what trial?" But when she saw his eyelids twitch and his nostrils quiver, she quickly changed her tactics. She sat down on his knee and hugged him to herself. "You sweet boy!—what's the hurry, all of a sudden? Good things take time! I promised you, didn't I, that it would be as soon as possible. But divorces don't go so quickly."

"Have you parted from your husband?"

"Parted? There's no need for parting right away. It's much better if you're friends." She bethought herself and hardened her voice.

"But I won't have you talk like that to me."

He sat motionless.

"Then you don't want to?" His voice sounded hollow, toneless.

"Of course I want to! But I can't be pushed into it! You must see that. You know I love you. On your account, I risked my whole reputation. If my uncle should find out, he would cut me off. All on account of you. Do I deserve that that you should treat me like this, just when I thought I had a real friend?"

He groaned. His head fell back like a dead weight.

"I can't hold out any longer. I shall lose my self-respect."

"But I'm telling you! And did you come just to scold me? You didn't even kiss me!"

His teeth set.

"Lia!"

She snuggled up to him. She locked her naked arms around his neck.

"And I looked forward so much to your coming! See, how pretty I made myself for you. You don't seem to have any eyes for me to-night. Were they mean to you again? Have you had anything to eat?"

No, he had not eaten. Only now, he remembered that he had not eaten all day. This anxiety, this torment of fears; perhaps it came from hunger and exhaustion. He let her lead him to the table. Mechanically, he ate everything she put before him. He drank some of that old red wine; but his eyes still held their absent gaze. Groans broke from him, and when he fitfully drew her to him, his face was distorted. with suffering.

She was beside herself with joy. To think that she had such power! She had never suspected that she could bring a man to such an extremity. Poor boy! But she could not very well mess up her whole life on his account. As soon as he got to the border, far away—such things have a way of straightening themselves out. "All is over." How could she tell him to his face? She was far too soft-hearted for that.

His head rested on her breast.

"I'm so tired. Oh!—Mother!"

Lia felt a rush of blood to her head.

"Come," said she.

She led him to another room, arranged pillows on the wide couch, covered him as a mother covers her child, and kissed his eyes.

"Sleep, my boy."

She stood over him and studied his face. What a changed man! Never would she have let herself in for anything had he looked like that in the beginning! How worried he looked—and old! And funny that, after only one bottle of wine, he should have left the table! . . . She shrugged her

shoulders and noiselessly slipped out of the room. . . . When her husband returned at midnight, he found her asleep.

Two hours later, Fred woke up. On his eyelids, he felt a stream of light. Drowsily, he lifted his head, and fell back on his pillow.

Lia, in a clinging nightdress, had stolen to his couch. She bent over him: "Fred, listen, don't you hear?"

"Lia——"

She crouched beside him. He felt the blood in him leap at the warmth of her body. He felt her kisses burn on his mouth. An ecstasy shot through him. It lifted every weight from him. He ached to shout his joy.

"Lia—are you free——?"

A low titter. She cuddled closer.

"He's asleep, Fred. Aren't you glad? And aren't you thrilled to think that now—that this very moment—he might come through the door——"

Had some one knocked him down? Was an icy hand tearing at his scorching vitals? Were the waves of a sea breaking over him? Or was this his blood sweeping over him like a torrent—blinding him? He heard himself panting.

Or was that she?

In a grip of steel his hands tightened around her neck, that pretty, sweet-smelling neck of hers.

"You dirty bitch!" he muttered, crazed with fury and disgust. "You dirty bitch!"

XVI

Pit found life in the bogs tolerable. He started his day by romping with his master, from the barracks to the assignment-shack, where he would bark a tempestuous good-by, dutifully listen to a lecture on the advantages of good behavior, and then set out to do as he sweetly pleased. First came the foreman's barnyard. The mother hen, with her fourteen chicks, taking her morning promenade, would parade by. Pit knew enough to dodge, since the day when, with outspread wings and angry cackling, she had settled with him for his advances. But the haughty black one, strutting across the yard in the hope of amorous adventure, would lose her dignity the instant Pit made for her, and scurry away in panic. He would chase her exuberantly, until a heavy wooden shoe whizzed over his head, or a woman's screeches warned him.

Tied to the post near the house was a goat. At the first sound of Pit's yapping, she would begin a frenzied gallop around the tying-post, until the rope nearly choked her. At this point, she would lower her horns—a signal for Pit to look elsewhere for adventure. Also, he could count on the cat. She usually squatted on the green bench in front of the shabby little house, a forbidding figure. To look at her, you would swear she saw nothing; but out of the slits of her green eyes, she watched his every move. When he came too near, her lightning paw would shoot out and give him such a box on the ear that he would lose his senses, while she swiftly drew back out of sight. But when she was not so sure of her retreat, away she would tear, over the cabbages and

beets, over the camomile-patch and the long pump-handle into the pigsty, or through the open house-door, where an ill-tempered woman was sure to yell: "There goes high-toned Reuter's cur again. He thinks he's a fine gentleman. He's a nobody, that's what he is." And if a pail of water happened to be at hand, Pit would get a drenching, from which he would emerge with ear-splitting yelps, his feelings deeply outraged. But the best fun was the red-brown oxen in the pasture, and the two-year-old white-maned Danish colts. The oxen had but one thing to do—submissively chew their cud and grow fat. Pit would watch them doing this, until the performance palled on him. Thinking to add a little zest, he would begin with the biggest of them, snapping at their legs and leaping at them, with an uproar worthy of a better cause. It was decidedly not to the interest of the thrifty owner, for his heavy live stock suddenly to take to shooting out their legs and frisking about like goats, and with lowered horns, to thunder after Pit, taking everything in their path along with them in their wild trot. Their frightened eyes and outstretched tails made a picture to gladden any heart. But Pit's heart was never gladdened, once the chase was on. And more than once Dietz had his misgivings.

Hearing Pit's shrill yapping in the distance, he would remark to Karl Wendheim, "He's getting spoiled here; I'd better put him out to board."

As for going to his assistance, that was out of the question. Barefooted Dietz stood there, in the bog, he and his friends, tossing out of the pit mud-oozing blocks of peat. These had to be stacked in neat piles, to dry in the sun. Undershirts and pants were all they wore. Their naked chests glistened with sweat, and their muscular arms were black with mud. They

looked like the rest; they also had their calloused hands, and their bent and weary backs were burned by the sun.

Karl Wendheim reminded Dietz that Fräulein Anneliese had offered to keep Pit.

Dietz suddenly bent to his work and seemed not to hear.

Little was spoken. Every minute meant more earnings. And besides, they did not want to fall behind the others. But at the noon hour, they did, somehow, manage to articulate their thoughts.

"Don't you think," said the pessimist, "that the postal service here is rotten?"

The question was put to Karl Wendheim. But it was Dietz who quickly shot back, "You bet!"

They lay on a little mound of turf, full length, their arms pillowing their heads, staring into the cloudless blue sky. Around them stretched a vast green plain. Mud pits. Long rows of freshly cut peat. Sleeping men dotted the ground. Far off, the women from the distant village and the barracks, who had brought the men their dinner pails, were now slowly walking back, making a pleasing picture in their red petticoats, with gaily flowered kerchiefs on their heads.

"God! but there's no end to this flatness!" groaned Dietz, as he gazed toward the horizon.

"—nor to the mud," added the pessimist, displaying his sopping feet.

Karl Wendheim hummed a song: "*Wenn all mein Geld versoffen ist, dann geh' ich fort zur See.*" He suddenly sat up. "Hasn't one of you, by any chance, a birthday to-day?"

No one had a birthday.

"Too bad—we might have celebrated."

That was worth considering. The foreman had a little keg of Schnapps. But it wasn't the right kind. You had to

have something when you celebrated, to work up a mood for it.

"When we get our letters—" Dietz hesitated before he came out with it.

A sudden liveliness laid hold of them. That was it. When their letters came, they would have a time of it. And if the overseer was in luck, his wife would be gone to town, and he would join them, too. Without his participation, it seemed, the Schnapps was not to be had.

As they picked themselves up to go back to work, Dietz observed, "It's only for Pit's sake that I care."

The others let it go at that.

On the third day, during the dinner hour, the letters came. The old letter-carrier felt outraged as the three snatched the letters from his hands, preventing him from making his pompous distribution. He wrenched his short pipe out of his mouth and without saying a word, stuck it back again between his teeth.

"Blockheads!" he grumbled. He was not a man given to much talk.

The three wheeled about and tore open their letters. They stood there, their backs to the letter-carrier and each facing in a different direction giving the astonished fellow a good opportunity to study them from behind. No pretty sight. The seats of their pants displayed some strange patchwork. God only knows where these fellows had learned to prolong the life of worn-out pants. But the naked brown calves of their legs were in good condition, and their bronzed necks, shining above their woolen shirts, left nothing to be desired. Patiently, the letter-carrier waited. Sometimes, it happened that this one or that one had a letter for him to take along and would give him something for his pipe. At last, Dietz

savagely swung around. No, he had nothing for the letter-carrier. He was calling Pit, that hound of Satan, who, unbidden, was already making for his master.

"Pit," shouted Dietz, his voice ringing across the marshes, "here, Pit. We're going to celebrate!"

The others, too, swung around. "Jansen! Foreman Jansen!" They assailed the old letter-carrier. "Got some spare time?"

"Yeh," he drawled, offended by the question. Why shouldn't a letter-carrier have spare time. Leisurely, he slipped his bag off, dropped it on the green bench, and sat down beside it. He took off his cap, wiped the sweat from his forehead and waited, curious and pleasantly expectant.

"Foreman Jansen——!"

He came. Broad and heavy, in a faded army-coat and high boots. A giant of a man, the kind only the moorlands can produce, blond, blue-eyed, and reticent. And the shoulders on him!

They wanted the Schnapps. They wanted to celebrate! A summer night's festival—with a dance!

"Nay!" said Jansen. "Who wants dancing when there's something good to drink?" They might even make it grog. Grog under the stars—while the mist rose over the peat-bogs. Knut Detlevsen has an accordion. And the letter-carrier could stay, too. The party could begin promptly at seven o'clock.

Jansen reflected. On second thought, the Schnapps was something in which his wife had speculated. She came from Mecklenburg, and speculation was in her blood. Now in cheese, now in Schnapps, just as it happened to come. The keg, to-day, chanced to be in the pigsty, under the potatoes. Every day she hid it in a different place, and was al-

ways uneasy lest her huband should find it. He humored her into believing he did not know its whereabouts. But just let the right moment come! She managed to take devilish good care of it, though.

"If my wife's at home, there's nothing doing," said he.

What had that to do with it? They wanted to pay! Cash! Just like other customers.

Jansen shook his head. Even if they offered her twice as much, she would think she was being cheated. Especially if he was to join in the drinking. For it was out of the question for him not to share in the speculation.

The matter looked serious. What! Give up their plans on account of an unreasonable woman?

The little barrel, Jansen told them, held twelve liters and had a tidy little hoop around it. The letter-carrier licked his lips.

"If you can't get it for us, we'll take it in to town," declared Dietz, clutching the letter. "We'll take the rest of the day off."

Agreed. What should they wear? "Service coats," ordered the pessimist, pulling in his belt.

Just then Jansen's wife, in her Sunday best, came out of the house. She was wearing a black dress, a flowered kerchief was on her head, and in the basket, slung across her back, she carried her boots, her umbrella and, judging by the smell, some ripened cheese.

"It's Tina's birthday!" she called to her husband. Then, giving Pit an angry look: "Must the beast always be under people's feet?"

Jansen looked his meekest. "Let 'im be, Mumsy."

Disdainfully, she swept past three polite bows.

"And if I catch you tramping through my best room with muddy boots——"

"No, no, Mumsy——"

Off she strutted. Presently, she turned back.

"The pigs have had enough. The pen is bolted."

In Jansen's eyes there was a play of lights.

"Yes, Mumsy."

He turned to the young men.

"That's what I call the will of God."

He was a pious man.

When Frau Jansen reached the gate, she turned around again and saw the boys running back to the bogs, and her husband conversing earnestly with the letter-carrier. She was satisfied.

The time had been set for seven. The navy officers appeared on the minute. Boots and blue cloth, caps tilted in readiness. Pit, however, cringed at his master's heel, looking thoroughly shamed. On the bogs, he had stopped to give vent to his exuberance by barking at a lone, grazing cow; setting her off at a crazy gallop, he chased her to his heart's content, only to have Dietz speak up for the cow. "Where's your sense of sportsmanship? Bad enough she has to put up with milking, and you go and chase her in the bargain."

From a distance, they had already heard the plantive wail of the accordion. Coming nearer, the doleful tune gradually lost itself in the wheezing of the worn leather case. It must have been leaky. But this did not disturb Knut Detlevsen and Jansen, or the letter-carrier, for that matter.

Dietz halted. Well! If they hadn't started ahead of time!

"Some nerve!" the pessimist grunted.

Nevertheless, the prospects looked good. In the clearing before the house stood a round table with a clean, white cloth, glasses, a tea-kettle, and a few bottles. Jansen had already tapped the little keg. Around the table stood the waiting chairs. Detlevsen labored to squeeze out of his accordion *Schleswig-Holstein, Merrumschlungen*, while Jansen and the letter-carrier were engaged in a hot debate over the letter-carrier's pipe bowl. The letter-carrier maintained the picture on it was that of a noble lady. Jansen argued it was a picture of King Christian. Any one could see that.

The greetings were profuse, the bows profound. But the letter-carrier had his suspicions. On account of Pit. Any young fellow with a dog like that——

The pessimist indulged in a guess. The tea-kettle had been put there only for show. Dietz asked if he might be permitted to sit down. A first drink went the rounds, and the dispute over the pipe bowl began again.

What an evening! The marshes were sunk in violet depths. Golden stars shone in the sky, and a silver light poured down from the moon. Every little while, they could hear a mournful lowing, and the night birds calling to their mates. Through it all, the accordion whimpered and wheezed, uninterruptedly.

"Listen. It's the cow," said the pessimist. "Poor cow!" At nine o'clock the letter-carrier began to weep pitifully. He remembered that he had promised his wife he would never drink again. Now, he was afraid to go home. "I'm in for it!" he moaned. "Now, I'm in for it!"

What should they do with him? They held a consultation. Jansen was still able to take in the situation, and became tender-hearted. Hadn't his wife gone off to enjoy herself? And had he not been forbidden even to visit the pigs! It

just so happened that he did visit them. Now, vaguely, he remembered that in the best room there was a sofa. Why couldn't the letter-carrier be stretched out on it? "She'll give it to me; she'll give it to me!" the fellow kept sobbing.

Dietz and Karl Wendheim led him into the best room. It was dark. The letter-carrier was in a sweat of fear. He clutched the mantel-shelf, only to rip off its nicely starched ruffle. He stumbled on the carpet, and matches had to be struck to quiet him. Under careful watch, he at last cried himself to sleep. Dietz recalled something. "If I catch you—" Carefully he lit a match to see if there were mud tracks on the carpet.

At ten o'clock, Knut Detlevsen keeled over and fell to the ground. He had held that last note much too long. That's how he had come to lose his balance. There he remained, and his music was never missed.

At eleven o'clock, Jansen grew confidential. His wife wore the pants. And when the wife wears pants— The worst of it was her temper. When he got drunk and couldn't look out for himself, she always beat him up; with the broom or with a stick! It was all the same to her. . . . He'd better not risk it. He'd better go to bed. Then, she wouldn't be any the wiser.

He, too, had to be led. Dietz termed his gait "a rolling sea dip—stage No. 5", but the pessimist said it was more of a fox-trot.

Thicker and thicker rose the mist out of the marshes. The Navy became sentimental. The Schnapps had done its work without the tea. Out of a clear sky, Dietz shot to his feet and announced: "I'm going to be married!"

The others rose to this bait—wabbly—blissful. They started for their bunks.

Pit followed dreamily.

All at once, something gigantic stood before them. Something monstrous. They stopped, bewildered.

"An elephant!" said Dietz in an awed whisper.

"No. A hippopotamus!" said the pessimist.

Karl Wendheim had his doubts.

"I once saw a hippopotamus, but it had no horns!"

Pit stayed in the background. He kept his tail between his legs. He had recognized the hippopotamus.

Then the hippopotamus said, "Moooooh——"

Of all things!—A cow! That poor lonesome cow left by itself in the bogs! She had been forgotten! She surely must have been forgotten! It would be positively unhuman to leave her here alone!

"Suppose it rains!"

"Or if it should storm!"

"What if she gets stolen!"

This was serious business. What should they do with her? Dietz untied the rope from the peg. They all took hold of it and led the cow to the yard. That took some time. Instead of one yard, any number of yards now spun around. And there were tables, too, and plenty to drink. The air was chilly. That much they were sure of. They sat down, drank, and held another council.

Dietz had it. He remembered the best room. It was really larger than you'd think. And the only person in it was the letter-carrier! They could bring the cow there. Then he wouldn't be alone. And the cow wouldn't be alone.

After much difficulty they got the mistrustful animal into the house. And when she finally landed in the room, the three breathed more easily. They had done a merciful piece of work. They tied the rope to the arm of a chair, Dietz

once more inspected the carpet, and then they set out to find their way to the barracks. They talked about the peat-bogs. What couldn't one find in a bog like that! Viking ships; golden drinking horns; trinkets once belonging to the Cimbrians and Teutons; and ever so many things. Best of all, the party had turned out a great success.

The night passed, and morning came. The sun rose. Knut Detlevsen did not see it, though it faintly kissed him, and neither did Jansen nor the letter-carrier. But the cow saw it. She knew that after the sun had crept clear of the horizon-line, it would not be long before Frau Jansen or one of the women from the barracks would begin the milking. The cow became impatient. She had never been in anybody's best room before. It was weird. She had never seen a snoring man, or a poodle dog of glossy china. Though the air was thick and moist just as it always was in the barn, and the red carpet wasn't so red any more, her cow-sense told her that something was wrong. She missed the grassy softness of the pasture. Her sniffing nostrils missed the cool morning air and the scent of the meadows. Her tail hung down, a melancholy thing. Her hoofs restlessly trampled the floor, always a welcome sign for the milkmaid in the barn, but unsuited to a best room. She nodded her stupendous head over the sleeping man. Her snorting breath brushed him.

The man moaned: "Mummy, mummy, I'll never do it again!"

The cow bellowed—in a scale of two keys—and with such a gusto that the geranium-pots on the window-sill danced, as a gentle rain fell on the man's face. She waited, curiously, to see the results of her efforts.

The man was awake. With wide-open eyes, he lay in a stupor, staring at the big head over him. He was sure it

was a monster of his own imagining. He squeezed his eyelids shut and quickly tore them open. Now he was convinced that he was seeing things. With a trembling hand, he reached for the monstrous head.

Again the cow bellowed.

It was her usual tone. Her hot breath was the ordinary breath of an exasperated cow. For the man it was the trumpet of doom itself. Hadn't his wife told him, time and again, that some day he'd come to a bad end? Here it was! His knees felt weak. His head was splitting—every hair burnt like a red-hot needle. Still, with a superhuman leap, he got past the monster—over the arm of the sofa. He cowered in the corner, shut his eyes, and began desperately to pray.

"God of mercy—don't forsake me in my hour of need!"

In the yard, too, there were signs of life. The woman from the barracks was there. Frau Jansen was not expected back from her sister's until late in the morning. Astonished, the good neighbor followed the cow's unmistakable tracks, stopped at the window by the green bench, and looked into Frau Jansen's best room.

"The Saints preserve us," she gasped. "That's crazy!"

When she entered the room, she clapped her hands together. That's what comes of leaving men alone! And the pretty carpet! The animal can't help it. That's her nature. Foreman Jansen had better look out! And how did the old letter-carrier get in here? He had better look out, too. The cow greeted the visitor with a happy moo. With hearty familiarity the woman slapped the expectant beast over the flanks, skillfully maneuvered her to the door, and did not notice that her long tail, behaving like a feather duster, had brushed down from the table a glass box that enshrined Frau Jansen's myrtle wedding wreath.

"Is that you, mumsy?" called Jansen from his bunk.

"Nay—only the cow—" answered the woman.

"That's good," said he, turning over on the other side.

Foreman Jansen appeared on the bogs at twelve o'clock. He came toward Dietz, who was standing ankle-deep in the mud, pitching peat, blocks.

"Telegram for you," said Jansen.

Dietz looked up at him, puzzled. The man was a sight. A red bandanna was wound around his blood-smeared, swollen cheeks, and his army cap was perched foolishly on top of it. The lines of his mouth were pulled to one side, and his eyes looked sadly out from under their swollen lids.

"Man alive—I mean Herr Jansen. What have you done to yourself?"

Jansen rubbed his left arm, felt the small of his back, and twisted his face in pain.

"I didn't do a thing! But my wife——"

Dietz leaped out of the pit.

"On account of the Schnapps?"

"No! On account of her mrytle-wreath! It gives me the creeps. Believe me, Reuter, in my day I have seen a donkey hit a bass drum, and a dancing pig play a flute. At a horse-fair near Tonning, Reuter; and the pig had a ballet-skirt on, and that was wonder enough. But that a cow should go into the best room because the letter-carrier is sleeping there, that's something I can't get into my head. You ought to see the room, Reuter! And me sleeping all the time like a child. So help me God! Oh, but she let me have it!"

He handed Dietz the telegram, refused all assistance, walked on a few steps, then turned around.

"But the letter-carrier got his, too. And don't you come telling me anything about the weaker sex!"

He kept on to the barracks, talking mournfully to himself.

Dietz gazed after him. He scratched his head. Vaguely, he remembered something about a cow—a lonesome cow. He must ask the others. But first, the telegram! He turned it over in his hand with foreboding. As he read the address, an icy dread, a nameless terror chilled him. He held his breath. Two people only knew his address. His landlady in Berlin, and Anneliese. Had anything happened to Anneliese?

For a moment, everything turned black in front of his eyes. He summoned up his courage, and read, "I beg a last proof of friendship. All is lost. Parents await you. Fred."

"It's Fred," he told himself uncomprehendingly. "Of course, it's Fred."

But he didn't understand! He had to sit down on the ground. A strange weakness numbed his knees. Fred was calling for him. Fred was asking for one last favor. What could that mean?

Five minutes later, he was telling the others that he must go to Berlin. They could read in his troubled face how urgent the matter that called him was. Dietz asked Jansen for leave to go. Hastily, he packed his few belongings. The two followed him silently. Jansen had said they might see Dietz off. Avoiding Dietz' eyes, the pessimist quietly asked, "Is it Anneliese?"

"No," replied Dietz hoarsely.

It took three hours to reach the Railroad station. No one spoke. Once, Karl Wendheim asked, "Who is it?"

"A comrade." The broken, husky voice forbade all further talk.

They reached the sleepy little station, and asked for a ticket. The station-master was milking his goat. He was not to be disturbed. The train was due in two hours. He was off duty now!

Up and down they paced—up and down. They said nothing. The others asked no questions. . . .

When Dietz was in his compartment, with his head stuck out of the window for a last farewell, the pessimist took courage to say, "If you should need us——"

"Yes," said Dietz, as the clasp of their hands tightened. "I hope to God I shall need you!"

The ride was endless. It lasted a day and a night. When, in a sweat of dread, he stood at last before his former landlady, she gaped at him, open-mouthed. How strange! Only yesterday, Herr von Stauffen had been there, and had sat in Dietz' little room for two hours. Every time she had looked through the keyhole, because it was so deathly still in there, Herr von Stauffen had been sitting on the sofa like stone, staring at the door. You would have thought he was waiting for some one. And she had had a letter for Herr *Reuter*,—a letter she must deliver to no one else. How funny that Dietz should have come to-day.

Dietz knew that he had come too late. He sat down on the sofa. And read. He did not know that the hours were passing. He knew only that he was keeping a death watch.

In front of the news-bulletin stood crowds of curious people. An outrage had been committed on a young woman. The suspected murderer was described; 10,000 marks was offered for his capture.

The papers gave the story. A gruesome murder! The post-war brutality of youth! It was rumored the murderer came from a good family!

A cordon of police had been thrown around the home of Colonel von Stauffen, and Tante Maria, much to her humiliation, had been forced to submit to a search of her house.

But in the suburb of Grüenewald, on the edge of a stream overhung with willows, a man was lying asleep. Many people passed him by. But early the next morning the gardeners trimming the hedges saw the little blood clots on the man's temples. Only then did they discover that the man was sleeping his everlasting sleep.

* * *

A father sits watching over his son's body, and with hollow, vacant eyes looks at death.

A mother, in the stillness of the night, steals to her boy and sits beside his body "Why, oh why did you not confide in us, my child?"

A friend had brought the letter: "Forgive me. I feel the pain I am going to cause you. If you could know all, you would forgive."

Something like an ache crept into the hearts of the lonely old people when Dietz asked them, "Will you let me come to you as he used to—like a son? I have no one in the world—and I often need advice. May I come to you?"

And one day, he came with Anneliese. Behind them stood a tall man with kindly eyes. It seemed as though the sunlight had suddenly entered, as though the future were shining into the dismal house. It was a holiday.

And yet, it was only of work and hardships that they spoke. And the young people showed their hard, firm hands.

They spoke of the new day, the new day that had brought with it its own new breed of men. Burdened—yes—but aware of their strength. They talked about the youth of the land, on whom the nation now leaned.

"Come often," pleaded the colonel. "Who knows?"—You may become the link to the new life which I cannot understand."

And Anneliese kissed Frau von Stauffen's hand. "But we must bring Pit with us."

Pit was still somebody.

On the stairs Anneliese broke into a sob, and flung her arms around Dietz. She did not know why. And Dietz did not know why. He let her think he believed it was on Pit's account, as he kissed the tears from her cheeks.

"You should have seen him on board," he said. "It was only on board that he ever felt really at home."

THE END

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